

The Image of Youth in Transformation

Nicaraguan University Students and the Path to Adulthood

Hanna-Maija Pääkkönen

Doctoral dissertation

To be presented for public discussion with the permission of the Faculty of Arts of the University of Helsinki, in Auditorium XII, University Main Building, on the 5th of April, 2019 at 12 o'clock.

ISBN 978-951-51-4881-0 (paperback)

ISBN 978-951-51-4882-7 (PDF)

Unigrafia

University of Helsinki, 2019

Para mis dos países blanco azules.

Abstract

In this dissertation, I research the social realities of Nicaraguan university students and how their experiences are constructed within different social fields. Youth studies in Nicaragua have focused strongly on gang-related violence and reproductive health. Academic youth is often left out of the studies, even though there has been an increased incorporation of young people, especially of the female population, in higher levels of education during the last two decades. The main objectives of this study were to broaden the view of Nicaraguan youth in a changing society by researching the experiences and social realities of Nicaraguan students, and to discuss the questions and contradictions of global and local youth from a Latin American perspective. This study produces new information both for the fields of Latin American studies and youth studies.

This study relates to a Latin American Youth studies tradition that focuses on understanding youth cultures and alternative lifestyles of the young, as well as on critical practices and searching for different approaches. The experiences of the young take a prominent place in this type of research, and both quantitative and qualitative processes of data collection are usually incorporated. Ethnography plays a crucial role in this model, and my research is also based on ethnographic material. This study is based on ethnographic material collected in Nicaragua during several periods of fieldwork from 2008 to 2016. The interviews analyzed in this study were conducted between May and August 2012. The specific group investigated in this study is Nicaraguan university students born between 1980-1997 who were studying at the time of the data collection. In total I conducted 305 survey interviews, 17 individual in-depth interviews and two focus group discussions, one with five and one with 12 participants. The data are, so far, the most comprehensive material on Nicaraguan university level students yet produced.

The material was analyzed within the interdisciplinary framework of the social and cultural construction of knowledge and the concept of the life course. Central to this study are the concepts of 'social fields,' 'capital' and 'habitus' as used by Pierre Bourdieu and the idea of the life course, originally presented by Glen Elder, as nonlinear and complex. The decision to use the theoretical frameworks presented here arose both from the data itself and the experiences and social situations I encountered when conducting this research in Nicaragua. The framework enabled me to move towards an approach that is sensitive to the global context without overruling the importance of local reality in the process of categorizing and researching the experiences of young people today.

My results show that despite global influences and opportunities, locality is an important form of social capital for students I studied, since, local networks provided the students with a sense of belonging as well as produce social capital. My data shows that despite increased globalization the importance of locality as a source of social capital cannot be underestimated, since according to my results social capital enabled the students in this study to move with ease within different conceptual frameworks. In the light of my material I also note that it is important to consider the influence of social media and virtual space when the reproduction of capital in the lives of the young is discussed.

Gender and class are also still relevant in the lives of the students who participated in this study. The students reworked and modified the spaces and places of gender in multiple ways. My results show that the knowledge of the correct manner of discussing gender and gender equality at the university and in the labor market is an important part of adapting the specific social rules expected from a student, while many of the traditional attitudes of gendered division remain intact in the private sphere of life.

The students who participated in this research valued education. My material also shows that the ability and skills to navigate the complex network of civic engagement opportunities is also a powerful form of cultural capital that can be accumulated through studies. A central result of this study is the importance of education as a transition rite. My results show that studying is an important rite of transition that is separate from possible labor market integration. Education itself has become a value, and being a student produces valuable social capital. Becoming a professional, as the students expressed it when discussing graduation, is a transition rite to becoming a fully recognized adult member of society. Thus, studying is not just a way of acquiring better access to economic capital or a necessity to maintain oneself financially, it is also an important rite and transition into adulthood; a process of endorsing a new place and role in society, independent of possible labor market integration.

Doctoral Dissertation
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	
Foreword	i
Acknowledgments	iv
Abbreviations	vii
I RESEARCH GOALS AND INSPIRATION	
1. Introduction	1
Research Objectives: The Social Realities of Nicaraguan Students	1
In Search of a Broader View on Youth: Youth Studies in Latin America and Nicaragua	7
Structure of the Study	12
II FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS	
2. Got Cacao?: The Mosaic of Nicaraguan Society	15
Un País de Poetas: Divided by Politics, Unified by Poetry	15
Coffee with Socialism: Nicaraguan Politics and Economy in the 21st Century	23
Studying in Nicaragua	27
3. ‘The Youth Question’:	
Key Concepts and Defining Questions in the Field of Youth Studies	31
What is Youth and How and Why Study It?	31
‘Free Will,’ Social Structures and Cultural Institutions: Structure vs. Agency	36
Social Generations and Change	39
4. Constructed Realities in a Changing World: Global, Local, Change and Time	45
Global Youth and Hybrid Identities	45
The Life Course: Theoretical Accounts and Changing Contexts	49
Constructing Social Realities	52
Space, Place and Time: On Temporality	56

III RESEARCH METHODS

5. Collecting and Analyzing Ethnographic Data	58
Ethnography and the Socially Constructed World	58
The Research Setting: Conducting Research among Nicaraguan University Students	62
6. Fieldwork and Data Collection	64
Population of the Study	64
Research Methods	66

IV FINDINGS

7. Spaces and Places of the Young	72
Presentation of the Identified Social Fields	73
Power Relations and Renegotiated Rules: Religion and Student Organizations	80
8. Global, Local and Youth in Nicaragua	93
Being Young: What Does It Mean?	94
Generation and Politics: Who Talks for Whom?	110
Global, Local and the Everyday Life	121
9. Becoming a Professional: Finding One's Place in Society	133
Transitions and Semi-dependencies: Studies, Work, and In Between	134
Four Ways of Making a Meaning	149
Rites of Transition in a Changing Society	161
10. Gender Reworked: Discourses, Traditions and Equality	167
Señor Obispo, Saque Su Rosario de Nuestros Ovarios: Gender Equality in Nicaragua	167
Young Masculinities and Femininities: Contesting the Traditional Images?	173
Feelings of Discrimination and 'Add-in' Equality	183
Spaces and Places of Gender Reworked: Theoretical Considerations	196

V CONCLUSIONS

11. Lives of the Young Theorized	202
Living in a Globalized Locality	202
Class, Gender and Generation: Do They Matter?	207
12. Mapping Out Future Research	211
On Capital: Resources in an Interconnected World	211

Youth Studies in Latin America: Obstacles and Possibilities	215
Afterword - #queserindatumadre	218
References	221
Appendices	246

TABLES

Table 1.	67
Survey participants: gender, year of birth, university, and province.	
Table 2.	68
Individual discussion and focus group discussion participants.	
Table 3.	68
Fieldwork periods and visits to Nicaragua 2008-2016.	
Table 4.	87
Survey responses: Have you experienced discrimination or exclusion?	
Table 5.	123
Survey responses: What type of media do you follow and how often?	
Table 6.	179
Survey responses: Meaning of the term feminism: Does feminism mean equality or more power to women than to men?	

FIGURES

Figure 1.	77
Presentation of identified social fields and capital used in each field.	
Figure 2.	79
Survey responses:	
How important is it to belong to a student organization?	
Figure 3.	86
Survey responses:	
How important is it to be able to follow one's own religious values?	
Figure 4.	117
Survey responses:	
Do you agree with the statement that politics do not work and it would be better to seek out alternative ways?	

Figure 5.	129
Survey responses:	
Do you use social media and how often?	
Figure 6.	131
Survey responses:	
Do you use the Internet to take part in conversations or virtual demonstration online to express your opinions or comments on social media or blogs?	
Figure 7.	135
Survey responses:	
How important to you is the current situation of unemployment in the country?	
Figure 8.	139
Survey responses:	
How important is it to you to work in any job as long as you can provide for yourself?	
Figure 9.	151
Description of the four identified groups:	
hyperactives, critics, go with the flows and family centered.	
Figure 10.	165
Presentation of the production of social positions in the identified social fields.	
Figure 11.	177
Survey responses: Do you agree with the following statement:	
Young men are less macho than old men.	
Figure 12.	186
Survey responses:	
How big a problem is unemployment in Nicaraguan society?	
Figure 13.	187
Survey responses:	
How big a problem is the lack of opportunities in Nicaraguan society?	
Figure 14.	188
Survey responses:	
How big a problem is gender inequality in Nicaraguan society?	
Figure 15.	193
Survey responses:	
Have you experienced gender-based discrimination or exclusion at the university?	

PICTURES

Picture 1.	6
Road to my primary school in Teustepe, Boaco, 1993.	
Picture 2.	19
Sandino and his images are still present in the everyday life of Nicaraguans.	
An image of Sandino along with a revolutionary text in FSLN's revolution-time colors painted on the wall of a house in San Juan del Sur, 2011.	
Picture 3.	21
The Island of Ometepe is situated in Lake Nicaragua,	
where the interoceanic canal plans have been taking place.	

Picture 4.	24
Young man selling beans in Mercado Oriental, Managua 2013.	
The rising prices of basic groceries has been a common concern in Nicaragua over the last few years.	
Picture 5.	81
Murals portraying the 1979 insurrections and revolution at the University campus of León, 2012.	
Picture 6.	85
Daniel Ortega's electoral campaign posters were on the sides of every major highway. The traditional black and red of FSLN was replaced with pink, 2011.	
Picture 7.	107
Students coming away from a leisure-time activity in León, 2010.	
Picture 8.	145
Social media meme: When they ask you for 10 years' work experience before you're 22.	
Picture 9.	158
Students spending time after classes in Boaco, 2012.	
Picture 10.	171
A famous image of a female guerrilla breastfeeding during the 1979 revolution is portrayed among the remnants of arms in Galeria de Heroés y Martirez, Estelí, 2009.	
Picture 11.	196
The quiet streets of El Rama, 2010.	

Picture credits:

Picture 1. Jukka Pääkkönen

Pictures 2.-7. and 9.-11. Hanna-Maija Pääkkönen

Picture 8. Social media meme shared in multiple social media sites.

Foreword

I have often joked about how both my current profession as a professional dancer, and my choice of academic field are due to a Finnish Valmet tractor taken to Angola back in the 1980s. When I was only a few years old my father, then a journalist, travelled to the refugee camp of Kwanza Zuly, in Angola. He reported on a development project built around a Valmet tractor; the tractor was used to produce bricks to build houses. A few years later the same project was moved to another continent, Central America, specifically a little town called Teustepe in Nicaragua. My father first travelled to Nicaragua at the end of the 1980s to work on the project, and a few years later our whole family followed for the first time.

I first landed in Managua, the humid and hot capital of Nicaragua at the age of eight. We arrived in June 1990, just a few months after the civil war that cut deep wounds into the country ended, at least on paper. Unión Nacional Opositora (UNO) had won the presidential elections against Federación Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN), a party that was formed after a leftist revolution overthrew a long-standing right wing dictatorship in 1979. Managua back in the 1990s was a strange combination of loud *mercados*, quiet and blissful middle class neighborhoods with beautiful backyards filled with greenery, *barrios* with red and black FSLN flags fluttering on the rooftops and one big hotel overlooking Lake Managua, or Xolotlán. When driving through the city's *autopistas* constructed during the dictatorship as an effort to convert Managua into a modern automobile city, one would get stuck in traffic jams with horse carriages. People were driving all sorts of old vehicles filled with merchandise. Buses donated by the Soviet Union, still decorated with texts in Russian, were so full that men were hanging outside holding on to whatever they could. At sundown, the wrecks of apartment buildings that were destroyed in an earthquake that devastated half of Managua back in 1972 gave a ghostly feel. Even after almost twenty years the ruins of the partly fallen buildings were mostly still standing, and in some of them were still families living surrounded by the destruction.

The political atmosphere was tense at the beginning of the 1990s. When the time came for us to return to Finland after a couple of months in Managua, the capital was on strike. We headed to the airport while FSLN supporters were building barricades of car tires on the roads and setting them on fire. We got through several of the barricades as my father would show his press card and tell the men guarding the road he was a supporter of FSLN. My little brother and I were singing children's tunes at the back

of the jeep. At the last barricade before the airport, we were told that the protesters had shut down the airport and we would not be let through. We returned to our house and stayed indoors for a few days, as our housekeeper Doña Delfina went through the backyards to buy us food. Our middle-class barrio seemed as tranquil as ever, but at times you could hear shots fired uptown.

And so, I got introduced to the misty mornings of the Central American rainy season, the crispy hot dryness that followed, the soft sounds of Nicaraguan Spanish, the smell of *gallo pinto* cooking, the nasal sounds of women selling food on the streets, and the swinging, vivid and hypnotic sounds of *palo de mayo*. During the years to come we returned several times. My father was working in a co-operation project in the countryside, and I went to a local primary school in our small village in Boaco. It was during those years I made friendships that have lasted into my adulthood and in a way led me to this study.

I am, and have always been a dancer. Movement with music has intrigued me since my early childhood, to the point that when I was three I announced to my mother that I was going to be a professional dancer when I grew up. Yet, the specific style of dance in which I have worked as a professional for the last seventeen years was very much dictated by my journey to Nicaragua. Ever since my first *piñata*, a birthday party in a small backyard in Teustepe, where the children tried to break the bear figure filled with candy while dancing to the rhythms of palo de mayo and cumbia, I was hooked. During the years to come I have studied, danced and explored culture, and humanity, through dance in various countries in Central America and the Caribbean, and learned to associate the word piñata not only with parties and the favorite tunes of my childhood but also with the complexities of Nicaraguan politics.

When I applied to the University of Helsinki in 2005 my aim and interests were clear, but there was no direct submission to the field I wished to study: Latin American Studies. Thus, I spent my first year in the University officially majoring in Finno-Ugrian languages. I gathered up the necessary courses to apply for a transfer to Latin American Studies, while acquiring a basic knowledge of Estonian and the etymology of Samoyedic languages on the side. I wished to understand better the continent that had formed a big part of my past, and where I still have several close friendships, godchildren and people I consider my extended family. Also, I had always been intrigued by human nature, and how human beings organize their world, and could never completely understand how these complex universes of

meaning could ever be understood just through one discipline. Thus, the multidisciplinary field of Latin American studies felt immensely interesting.

The research at hand is in a way a continuation of my interest in Nicaragua, and different societies, as well as my bachelor studies and master's thesis. My bachelor study dealt with a Nicaraguan women's organization and led me to read all the old revolutionary era *Barricada* magazines I could find stored in the Helsinki University library. I probably drove the library staff insane, since they had to carry the magazines back and forth on a daily basis for months. Later, I continued to my master's thesis, which researched the political identity of Nicaraguan University students. During my studies, I had worked both as a dance teacher as well as a freelance journalist, and written specifically on development issues in Latin America and, of course, in Nicaragua. When I graduated in 2011, I felt that several questions in my master's thesis had been left unanswered. As I dug deeper, I noticed that the image the existing research paints of the young of the country so dear to me was very restricted and negative. I wished to shed light on the experiences of young Nicaraguans, and learn more myself during the process.

I have been working full time as a dance teacher while conducting my research, and I have often had to answer the question "why?" when it comes to this study. Mostly the question has dealt with the fact that many consider my profession to be very far from this research. Yet, from my point of view the two things, dance and research, do not collide. For me both dance and research are ultimately ways of organizing, understanding and reflecting the world around us. As a dancer, I conclude, explain and tell stories through movement, and as a researcher I do the same with words. Both aim to produce knowledge, express and investigate our surroundings, and sometimes make declarations. As a dancer I create a choreography where different influences, experiences and observations lead to an entirety, that is a mixture of my observations and the collaboration of others; the music, the lights, the stage and the audience, and everything I have learned from other dancers and teachers. This research is, as a choreography, a combination of my Nicaragua, the Nicaragua of the young people who participated, and the knowledge and skills of the people who have dedicated their time and careers to research and from whom I have been privileged to learn.

Acknowledgments

The journey of a doctoral student from the initial research idea to writing these words of acknowledgment is long, winding and definitely not unobstructed. There have been multiple points during my research when I have doubted myself, when I have reluctantly had to let go of an idea that proved wrong, realized I must take a step back to be able to move forward, and countless moments of epiphany as I have realized things I had not considered or understood before. I would like to express my gratitude to the people who made this journey possible, and aided me with this project when I most needed assistance and reassurance.

First, I would like to express my gratitude for my principal supervisor Martti Pärssinen, my second supervisor Harri Kettunen, and Antti Korpisaari. Ever since I first discussed my research with Martti he has been encouraging and insightful, and I appreciate his open and interested approach in my research. Martti has remained encouraging throughout this process, even though my working methods – pondering on everything for years and then writing over 200 pages in one go – have no doubt been slightly difficult from the point of view of supervising the progress of a research. In the last stages of this process, when I begun to doubt myself, Martti's encouragement and support was extremely important. Harri has given me valuable insight and comments during my research, shared his knowledge and encouraged me, which I deeply appreciate. Antti supervised part of my bachelor's thesis, and has commented on my dissertation over the years. He has always been extremely helpful and easily approachable, for which I give him special thanks. I would also like to extend my gratitude to my master's thesis supervisor Elina Vuola, who was the first person to encourage me to continue my research towards a doctoral dissertation. The support, insight and comments of all these scholars have been indispensable.

I am deeply grateful to my pre-examiners Professor Darcie Vandegrift and Adjunct Professor Maaria Seppänen, who gave freely of their time to give me very detailed and constructive criticism. I am also very honored and thankful to Professor Vandegrift for taking the time to travel to my doctoral defence in Helsinki. I would also like to extend my gratitude to Pirjo-Kristiina Virtanen for acting as the faculty representative in my dissertation committee, and Antti Korpisaari for acting as the second faculty representative.

In addition, I would like to express my gratitude to several people and institutions who have given me valuable comments and supported me during this project. I wish to thank Harri Vuorisalo-Tiitinen, Kari Paakkunainen, and the participants of the doctoral seminar of our department for their comments during my research. I am also very grateful to the University of Helsinki Research Foundation for funding me during my first year of study, as well as for the University of Helsinki Chandlers Travel Grant and the Finnish Youth Research Society, who funded conference trips that aided and inspired me during my research. Also, I wish to thank the Deans of UNAN and UNA Nicaragua for assisting me with my interviews.

This study would not have been possible without all the Nicaraguan students who participated and spent their valuable time with me. All the students who took part in this research deserve my deepest gratitude. They took the time to answer my questions, take part in the interviews and let me participate in their lives. I truly appreciate their investment in this study and only hope I have been able to do justice to their experiences.

Since I have been working full time as a dance teacher and creative director throughout this process, I must extend my gratitude to the people who I have been working with. I am also very grateful for all my dance students and the workers at my dance school Studio Tambor. Thank you for putting up with me especially during this last year, as I from time to time have been quite absent minded due to the pressure of writing. Your patience is deeply appreciated, as is your tolerance of my extremely bad jokes.

Finally, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my friends and family. Both my Finnish and Nicaraguan families have aided me tremendously throughout this research, and I could not have completed this dissertation without their support. I wish to thank Lupe, Octavio and Rogelio for the friendship that has lasted since our childhood despite several years spent on opposite sides of the globe, my Nicaraguan dance family, and especially David and Bessy and their beautiful children whom I am honored to call my godchildren. They have supported me, kept me in touch with my other home when I could not be physically present, and whom I consider both friends and family. Special thanks go to David for aiding me with my interviews and spending hours and hours on University campuses with me. My thanks also go to Berman, Gaspar, and Fernando for your friendship. I would also like to thank my partner in crime in Costa Rica, Sofi, for peer support, great conversations and friendship.

The biggest thanks go to my Finnish family; my parents for always supporting me in whatever I decide to do, my younger brother Juho for simply existing and for reading and commenting on my dissertation when I had spent so many hours in the library that I wasn't even sure whether the text was readable, and to my husband Ilkka for all his support and patience over the years. Much love and gratitude goes out to our beloved son Rubén Andile, just for being our son, and for making sure that mom sometimes concentrates on other important things in life; such as constructing Legos and playing peek-a-boo.

My most sincere thanks to you all.

Abbreviations

ALBA Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América

BICU Bluefields Indian and Caribbean University

CNU Consejo Nacional de Universidades

FSLN Federación Sandinista de Liberación Nacional

ILO International Labour Organization

RAAN Región Autónoma del Atlántico Norte

RAAS Región Autónoma del Atlántico Sur

UCA Universidad Centroamericana UCA de Nicaragua

UCATSE Universidad Católica Agropecuaria del Trópico Seco

UNA Universidad Nacional Agraria

UNAN Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua

UNEN Unión Nacional de Estudiantes Nicaragüenses

UNI Universidad Nacional de Ingeniería

UNIAV Universidad Internacional Antonio de Valdivieso

UNO Unión Nacional Opositora

UPOLI Universidad Politécnica de Nicaragua

URACCAN Universidad de las Regiones Autónomas de la Costa Caribe Nicaragüense

I RESEARCH GOALS AND INSPIRATION

1. Introduction

*Ay Nicaragua, Nicaragüita,
la flor mas linda de mi querer,
abonada con la bendita,
Nicaragüita, sangre de Diriangén.*

*Ay Nicaragua sos mas dulcita,
que la mielita de Tamagas,
pero ahora que ya sos libre,
Nicaragüita, yo te quiero mucho mas.
pero ahora que ya sos libre,
Nicaragüita, yo te quiero mucho mas.¹*

Luis Enrique Mejía Godoy
Nicaragua, Nicaragüita. Canto Epico al FSLN 1980

Research Objectives – The Social Realities of Nicaraguan Students

In this study, I research the social realities of Nicaraguan university students and how their experiences are constructed within different social fields. The studies conducted so far on Nicaraguan youth have been strongly influenced by issues related to reproductive health and gang violence. This gives a very limited perspective on the realities of young Nicaraguans. As for Latin America in general, the heterogeneous region hosts such a cultural diversity that new approaches and in-depth studies on its

¹ Oh Nicaragua Nicaragüita, most beautiful flower of my love, fertilized with, Nicaragüita, the blessed blood of Diriangen. Oh Nicaragua, you are even sweeter than the honey from Tamagas. But now that you are free, Nicaragüita, I love you much more. But now that you are free, Nicaragüita, I love you much more. All translations are my own.

young people are needed. In Nicaragua, academic youths are often left out of the academic studies discussing youth, even though increasing numbers of young people across the whole of Latin America, especially among the female population, have gained access to higher levels of education during the last two decades. Unfortunately, the increase in higher education has not led to a corresponding increase in work opportunities for university graduates (Welti 2002: 279). University students have played a strong historical role in Latin American politics and societal transformations (Coe and Vandegift 2015: 133). Despite this, I do not use the term academic youth as a proxy for a social class. The students who participated in this study come from very different social backgrounds, and their restrictions regarding their choices, their global mobility and their opportunities vary. Thus, by academic youth I refer to a group of young people who have very different backgrounds and life courses, yet have had the privilege to study at the university level. Many of the respondents did feel they were in a privileged position, as one of the survey participants commented: “Of the youth of today not many have the chance to study and fulfill their goals due to the economic shortages. There should be more universities or other public universities or the government should support university studies more.”²

With this study, I wish to both voice the experiences of the students that participated as well as to broaden the view of what it means to be young, specifically in Nicaragua. For many of the students who participated in this study being young and being a student was both a privilege and a responsibility that was constrained by the situation of their home country. As one of the students expressed:

To be young is to have limitations and fulfill expectations. And the limitations are mostly the problems that exist in our country, the problems of finding employment at a young age, the problems of completing the studies. We could say the other aspect is to fulfill what society demands of you. It is the responsibility we have when young of moving forward from a social point of view in this country.³

In this study, I focus on the experiences of students in a changing society by researching their social realities. I also discuss the questions and contradictions of global and local youth from a Latin American

² *Male C, Group 2.* Original in Spanish: Hoy en día de la juventud actual no muchos tienen el chance de poder estudiar y cumplir sus metas debido a la escasez económica. Deberían surgir más universidades u otras universidades públicas o el gobierno apoye más en el estudio universitario.

³ *Male H, Group 2.* Original in Spanish: También ser joven es tener las limitaciones y cumplir con las expectativas. Y las limitaciones son más que todo los problemas que existen en nuestro país, los problemas de conseguir un empleo de temprana edad, los problemas de culminar los estudios. Podemos decir el otro aspecto también es cumplir con lo que la sociedad vos está exigiendo. Es la responsabilidad que tenemos como joven como salir adelante desde un punto de enfoque social

perspective. Globalization has been widely discussed and researched.⁴ For the purposes of this study, I conceptualize globalizations following Turner and Khondker (2010: 17-32) as a set of historical intertwined processes with certain structural properties that affect human beings' consciousness and their everyday lives. Analysts usually approach the questions of globalization from three different angles: 1) the global economy and the transformation and integration of capitalism into an integrated global economy; 2) global politics, such as supra-national regulatory mechanisms and 3) cultural dimensions, such as worries about globalization undermining the continuity and authenticity of indigenous cultures; the uniformization of cultures, and the loss of distinctiveness in cultural products and in cultures, balanced by the possibility of new modes of governance and cosmopolitan democracy (Chan et al. 2007: 2-5). These global changes and processes also affect the local communities where the young live their everyday lives as local traditions and cultures are penetrated by global cultural forces and economic changes. Thus, locality becomes the meeting point of multiple cultural and political influences, constrained at the same time by global shifts in the economy.

Hence, one of the biggest challenges for youth studies today is how to approach the complexities of studying and understanding the lives of young people living in a world that is interconnected but at the same time very fragmented. To be able to address this challenge, specifically in the case of Nicaragua, we need to look deeper into the processes of cultural, social and economic changes in the country. This said, I have two main objectives I wish to accomplish with this study:

- A. Broaden the view of the Nicaraguan youth in a changing society by researching the experiences and social realities of Nicaraguan students.
- B. Discuss the questions and contradictions of global and local youth from a Latin American perspective, and move towards an approach that is sensitive to the global context without overruling the importance of local reality in the process of categorizing and researching the experiences of young people today.

To accomplish these goals, I focus on the following specific questions:

⁴ See e.g. Ampuja 2012, Held and McGrew 2007.

1. How are Nicaraguan students situated within their social systems; how do they position themselves within the global and local realities and the social situations they encounter in their everyday life?
2. What elements are involved in constructing the social experiences of Nicaraguan university students, and how are these experiences expressed in different social fields?
3. What kind of hierarchies, differences and similarities can be seen between the experiences the students describe and the assumptions made by the existing research and frameworks? Why might these differences and similarities be so?

This study is based on ethnographic material collected in Nicaragua through several periods of fieldwork⁵ and contains survey questionnaires, thematic interviews, group discussions and field notes. I analyze my material within the interdisciplinary framework of the social construction of knowledge and the concept of the life course. Central to my study are the concepts of ‘the life course,’ originally presented by Glen Elder (1974, 1994), and the concepts of ‘social fields,’ ‘capital’ and ‘habitus’ as used by Pierre Bourdieu (1984). I define the life course as “a sequence of socially defined events and roles that the individual enacts over time” (Giele and Elder 1998: 22). I do not consider the life course to be linear; it is instead complex, nonlinear and reversible. The concept of the life course highlights the connection between individual lives, historical context and change. Bourdieu (1984) calls social situations ‘social fields.’ Social fields possess their own principles, practices and forms of using power. Social fields are structures of relative positions, the resources available; capital and its compositions, determine the place of the social agent within the social system. Habitus comprises a set of internalized possibilities and dispositions that enable people to orientate themselves in social situations. The concepts of social fields and capital are useful tools in my analyses when I discuss the power relations, social situations and resources available for students, while the notion of habitus provides a group-distinctive framework of social cognition and interpretation, and thus serves as a useful concept for understanding and explaining social interactions.

The results I present here are in a way a co-construction of my notes and interpretations and the voices of the students who participated in this research. One of the aims I have in this study is well defined by Miles (2000: 2): “young people need to be provided with a voice which actually addresses what it

⁵ The fieldwork timetable is found in Table 3, page 69.

means to be part of the sorts of social changes that they experience daily.” To accomplish this I have aimed to be reflexive about my own past and experiences and how they may influence my interpretations. Considerations of reflexivity are particularly central to the practice of ethnographic research, since both the personal history of the ethnographer and the disciplinary as well as the broader social circumstances under which the ethnographer conducts the research have a profound effect on the topics selected, the people chosen to study and the relations between the researcher and the informants in the field (Davies 2008: 5). In doing any kind of research, researchers are bound to reflect on their relation to the object studied. As Davies (2008: 3) points out, there is an implicit assumption that we are investigating something ‘outside’ of ourselves, yet we cannot research something we have no contact with. On account of this, all researchers are to some degree connected to the object of their research. I have lived and gone to school in Nicaragua in my childhood, and worked and traveled in the country for long periods of time in my adulthood. I have a strong connection to the country and it forms a part of my personal history. My understanding and knowledge of Nicaragua and Nicaraguan culture have been imperative in my fieldwork, but at the same time I have had to pose myself some strict questions about my own position in relation to my research. I am aware, for example, that unlike many of the students I interviewed I have always had the privilege of deciding where to live and study. Thus, to bring forward the experiences of the young I aim to present what they said and how they described the situation as transparently and clearly as possible.

This study aims to produce new information both for the field of youth studies and for Latin American studies, and to open a window onto the lives of Nicaraguan students. In the following section I discuss youth studies in Latin America and Nicaragua, and how this study is situated within the field of youth studies in the region.



Picture 1. Road to my primary school in Teustepe, Boaco, 1993.

In Search of a Broader View on Youth: Youth Studies in Latin America and Nicaragua

The academic field of youth studies is largely a product of the university infrastructures found in developed countries and the field as an international endeavor has centered mainly on Europe, the United States, Canada and Australia, with English as the main language of communication (Côte 2014a: 3). Youth studies in general remain a rather Eurocentric enterprise, and as Brown and Larson (2002: 2) point out, a disproportionate number of our images of this period in life are based on the idea of an American or European teenager. Thus, research of young people and their lives in different societies is very much needed.

Youth studies in Latin America combines different traditions and approaches developed over almost a century. These traditions can roughly be presented as three different approaches to youth studies in the region, each one marked by specific historical circumstances. First of these approaches see the young as actors and it is strongly linked to the university reform movement of the early twentieth century. The second tradition flourished in the context of the economic and social crisis of the 1980s, when youth groups were seen both as a problem and the most vulnerable victims of the societal situation. The third tradition runs parallel to the previous two, but focuses more on understanding youth cultures and the experiences of the young, as well as on the critical practices and alternative life styles of the young in search of different approaches. This third type of research often relates to questions of youth culture, agency and change and both quantitative and qualitative processes of data collection are usually incorporated (Oliart and Feixa 2012: 337).

This study relates strongly to the third tradition of Latin American Youth Studies. Ethnography has a crucial role in this model, and thus my research is also based on ethnographic material. During the last few years, ethnographic research on youth and students in Latin America has been conducted in for example Chile (Risør and Arteaga Pérez 2018), Brazil (Virtanen 2007, 2012; Rizzini et al. 2010), and Honduras (Wolseth 2008). In Nicaragua, ethnographic research has focused mainly on the indigenous communities of the Atlantic coast (see e.g. Lucerno 2017, 2018). Thus, this study breaks new ground in the field of youth studies in Nicaragua.

Despite the traditions discussed above, youth studies in Latin America remains a fragmented field. The approaches used when studying youth, and the youth policies applied, vary depending on the country. The web of institutions dedicated to youth issues is also very diverse. For example, as Oliart and Feixa

(2012: 334) point out, in some Latin American countries there is a history of more than thirty years of public intervention on youth issues from the state, while in some other countries in Latin America this process is just beginning. Approaches also vary from the top-down approaches often preferred by the state to the tendency among NGOs to rely on youth actors organized as stakeholders supported by professional adults. Regarding academic studies, what is in my opinion too often left unsaid is that study subjects are very often at least partly selected according to potential funding, thus the availability of funding tends to determine the subjects studied. Funding sources are usually tied to development goals, and finding funding for independent academic research is even more difficult in Latin America than in Europe (Oliart and Feixa 2012: 336). This obviously affects the topics investigated and creates a limited scope of research, resulting in a limited image of the youth of Latin America that generalizes the lives and experiences of the young people of a very heterogeneous region. It is also the young who most often deal with the strain of global pressures and opportunities and their local realities.

Youth studies are often closely related to youth policy. The issues that engage youth researchers are frequently of interest to policy makers as well, particularly crime and youth culture (Furlong 2013: 5). Even though this study does not directly relate to youth policy it is important to note that most of the youth research conducted in Nicaragua discusses specifically the same issues Nicaragua's youth policy has focused on: violence, drugs and reproductive health. Some of the students who participated in this study expressed a preoccupation with the same issues, as shall be discussed in my results. Oliart and Feixa (2012: 329) discuss the 'magic triangle' of academic research, social agency and public policies, which ideally consist of exchanges between youth research, youth work and youth policy with youth in the center. However, in reality, if this goes wrong the 'magical triangle' may criminalize young people. Furlong (2013: 5) states that it would not be unfair to suggest that there is always a high-level of interest in young people when their behavior causes concerns and they are perceived as a problem due to this behavior. This seems to be the case in Nicaragua, since Nicaragua's youth policy has been moving in the same direction as El Salvador's *Mano Dura* policy, which advocated the immediate imprisonment of children even as young as 12 if they display gang-related symbols in public (Jütersonke et al. 2009: 373-382).

Considering the topics covered in most studies on Nicaraguan youth, it would be quite easy to form a picture of uniquely violently behaving gang members and their victims and thus concentrate on policy goals to resolve this 'problem.' Research on Nicaraguan youth has had a strong emphasis on gang-

related crimes, sexual health issues and violence against women. Gang violence has been discussed both in the Spanish and English language research. In the Spanish language research, for example, Bellanger et al. (2004) have researched the Nicaraguan *pandillas*, and Rocha (2006, 2010, 2011) has discussed public policies, youth violence and gangs in Nicaragua. In the English language research, Rodgers (2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2007a, 2007b) has conducted extensive work on gang membership, social change and violence in Nicaragua, and Jütersonke et al. (2009) have mapped out the situation in Central America. Maclure and Sotelo have focused on children's rights in Nicaragua (2003) as well as on gang membership as structured individualization (2004), and Gómez researched Nicaraguan youth policy and responses to violence. Peetz (2008, 2011) has discussed the discourses of youth violence in Nicaragua and their relations to policies, and has also researched the theme in Costa Rica and El Salvador.

Reproductive health and young adults' sexual behavior have also been themes of interest in the field of Nicaraguan youth studies. Bravo (2016) discusses the effects of alcohol and drug abuse on the sexual practices of young Nicaraguans in Chontales, and Meuwissen et al. (2006) have researched the impact of accessible sexual and reproductive health care among poor adolescents in Managua. One of the few studies that specifically discusses university students is a research by Lam Rueda et al. (2016) that focuses on medical students in UAM and UNAN-León and their knowledge of HIV. Research on young people, sexuality and HIV in Nicaragua also includes the analysis of gender: Manji et al. (2007) have researched gender roles and HIV transmission in León, Rani et al. (2003) have discussed the nature and magnitude of gender differences in sexual norms, and Zelaya et al. (1997) have focused on adolescents' sexuality in the light of social differences and gender.

This study also discusses gender and gender roles in Nicaragua. Apart from sexual health and sexuality, gender has been researched in Nicaragua from multiple perspectives. During the 1980s and 1990s the research focused strongly on women and women's movements. Chinchilla researched women in revolutionary movements (1983) and the democratic transition and feminism (1994) in Nicaragua. Molyneux (1984, 1998) has specifically discussed the revolutionary era and Sandinista women, and women's emancipation in Nicaragua after the revolution. Reif (1986) has researched women in guerilla movements, including women who participated in the Nicaraguan guerilla movements, and Randall (1981) has discussed the experiences of Nicaraguan women after the revolution. In the beginning of the

21st century, scholars have also begun to discuss right wing somocista women (e.g. González 2001, González-Rivera and Kampwirth 2010), as well as gender and cultural politics (e.g. Babb 2001).

During the last few years, research on gender in Nicaragua has focused on both women and men, although the focus has mostly been on domestic violence and sexual abuse or reproductive health. Bogen (2015) has conducted a case study of reproductive rights in Nicaragua, Salazar et al. (2016) have researched young Nicaraguan women's discourses on femininity, intimate partner and sexual violence and reproductive health, and Salzar and Öhman (2015) have analyzed young Nicaraguan men's discourses on intimate partner and sexual violence. Torres et al. (2012) have studied young Nicaraguan men who participated in reproductive health and gender training programs. Obando et al. (2011) on the other hand have focused on young Nicaraguan men's suicide attempts. None of these studies have focused on university students, and in most studies the educational background of the participants is not specified. However, these studies provide important contexts for the discussion on gender presented in this study.

This study discusses the social experiences of Nicaraguan students, including local politics and religion. The religious profile of Latin America is experiencing rapid changes, and Gooren (2003, 2010), for example, has researched religion and politics specifically in the Nicaraguan context. However, religion and young people in Nicaragua is a topic that has barely been discussed, and thus the results and discussions on religion of my study provide significant new information, as well as point to an interesting and important topic of research. Nicaraguan politics and political culture on the other hand is a widely researched topic, discussed also by Nicaraguan authors (e.g. Álvarez Montalván 2008), but research focusing on young people and politics remains scarce. A few Nicaraguan scholars have researched the political culture of young Nicaraguans, and discussed some of the themes that are central in my study as well. Vázquez, Panadero and Paz Rincón (2006) have researched non-conventional political action among Spanish, Chilean, Salvadorian and Nicaraguan university students. However, they do not separate the answers of the students of each country in their results, and thus comparisons to the results of this study are hard to make. Abaunza and Solórzano (1998) have researched young people, social change and collective action in the 1990s in Nicaragua and Agudelo (1999) summarises the situation of young people in Nicaragua in the 1990s. The studies that relate closest to my research are Montenegro's (2001) research, which discusses the political culture of the generation of the 90s, and Mercado and Vásquez's (2012: 32-57) research on the political culture of urban youth in the capital

area of the country. Mercado and Vásquez's (2012: 32-57) study focuses on the subjectivity, political culture and social reproduction of political culture of young people between 15-29 years. They also present a summary of four different profiles based on attitudes toward social reality, a study which is relevant in the light of my results as well. I return to both Mercado and Vásquez and Montenegro's studies later in my analysis.

None of the studies discussed here, apart from the research on knowledge of HIV conducted by Lam Rueda et al. (2016), have focused specifically on university-level students. Studies related to Nicaraguan university students mainly focus on academic performance, or pedagogy, such as Hernandez et al. (2016), which focuses on factors affecting the study performance in mathematics among UNI (National University of Engineering) students. Research on students and their everyday lives is almost non-existent, and Nicaraguan university students have not been studied as a specific group from the perspective presented in my study. As discussed here, especially the English language research focuses strongly on violence and gang issues. To present a very concrete example, if one searches for information about young Nicaraguans from the University of Helsinki's Helka-database⁶ one ends up with basically two results: Sofia Montenegro's (2001) Spanish language book on the generation of the 1990s and two books on youth violence (Jones and Rodgers 2009) and street gangs (Bruneau et al. 2011). A more comprehensive search from academic journals and databases gives similar results. This obviously does not allow us to make any sweeping generalizations, but it does suggest what kind of information is easily available about Nicaraguan youth. Without undermining the importance of these topics, I do feel that a broader perspective on youth in Nicaragua is beneficial both for the field of youth studies in general but especially for youth studies scholars working in Latin America.

⁶ Search conducted 13 March 2017.

Structure of the Study

The dissertation consists of five parts: introduction, framework of analysis, methods, findings and conclusions. In part II, I present the framework of my analysis. Chapter 2 includes basic information about Nicaraguan society and sheds light on students' everyday realities. The chapter includes a description of the central historical and political circumstances that have molded Nicaragua into the country it is today, as well as providing the reader with an overview of the societal context of my analysis. In Chapter 3 I present the current debates of the field of youth studies, which I reflect on throughout my analysis. I discuss the fundamental questions of how to define the youth period of life and present the key concepts in youth studies.

In Chapter 4 I discuss further the questions presented in Chapter 3 and evaluate the new proposals in the field of youth studies, such as Arnett's (2004, 2014) suggestion about 'emerging adulthood.' Chapter 4 also presents the theories and frameworks used in this study. My material was analyzed within the multidisciplinary framework of the social and cultural construction of knowledge. I apply the concepts of 'social field,' 'capital,' and 'habitus' as Bourdieu (1977, 1984) has used them. Central to my study is also the idea of the life course, originally presented by Glen Elder (1974), as complex and nonlinear.

Part III includes information on my research methods, field work and data analysis. This study is based on ethnographic material collected in Nicaragua during several periods of fieldwork from 2008 to 2012. My research methods included a survey questionnaire, in-depth interviews, group discussions and participant observation. The specific group interviewed in this study is Nicaraguan university students born between 1980-1997 who were currently studying at the time of data collection in 2012. The research participants represented all departments of the country, and there were participants from both public and private universities. In total I conducted 305 survey interviews, 17 individual in-depth interviews and two focus group discussions, one with five and one with 12 participants. Specific information on my research material and the populations studied are found in Tables 1 and 2 in Chapter 5. My analysis methods and a fieldwork timetable are presented in Chapter 6.

In part IV I present my findings. I begin Chapter 7 by presenting the social fields I have identified and discuss the social realities of the students studied. The fields identified in this section form a base for my analysis throughout the study. In Chapter 8 I move on to discuss two of the most divisive themes that

arose from my material: religion and the politicization of the student union, and discuss the implications of these divisions in the lives of the students.

In Chapter 9 I analyze what it means to be young in Nicaraguan society, and discuss the contradictions of the global and local realities. When students enter university they cognitively adapt to certain kinds of behavior and rules, and act in a different way in the academic sphere than when they interact with their friends or peer groups. My results show that despite global influences and opportunities, locality is an important form of social capital for the students since local networks provide the students with a sense of belonging as well as produce social capital. I also note the importance of considering the effects of social media and virtual space when we discuss the reproduction of capital in the lives of the young.

Chapter 9 also focuses on the transitions from studies to work. I discuss the structural obstacles students encounter, and identify four different ways of meaning making under conditions of uncertainty. I also show that studies, 'becoming a professional' is an important rite of transition that is separate from possible labor market integration. My results show that education itself has become a value, and being a student produces valuable social capital. Thus, 'becoming a professional,' as the students expressed it when discussing graduation, is a transition rite to becoming a fully recognized adult member of society.

In Chapter 10 I discuss discourses on gender and equality. I show that the young rework and modify the spaces and places of gender in multiple ways, and that the contradictory discourses on gender equality in Nicaraguan society have created contradictory implications and interpretations of the meaning of terms such as 'gender,' 'feminism' and 'gender equality.' I also show how some of the male students have modified the meaning of gender equality towards what some scholars refer to as *caballerismo*, considered a positive form of *machismo*. My results show that knowledge of the 'correct' manner of discussing gender and gender equality at the university and in the labor market is an important part of adapting the specific social rules expected from a student, while many of the traditional attitudes of gendered division remain intact in the private sphere of life.

Part V of this study includes a conclusion of my results as well as my proposals for future study topics. In Chapter 11 I discuss the most important results of this study. I conclude that despite increased globalization, the importance of locality as a source of social capital cannot be underestimated, since according to my results social capital enables the students to move with ease within different conceptual

frameworks. I also note that class and gender remain factors we must consider, since they continuously structure the lives of the young and affect the decisions they are able to make.

In Chapter 12 I present my suggestions for future research and discuss the prospects of youth studies in Latin America. I suggest that the youth studies paradigm in the region should be expanded and research should include young people from more diverse social backgrounds, in this case meaning young people whom are not necessarily facing the social problems related to gang membership, or youth crime.

II FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

2. *Got Cacao?: The Mosaic of Nicaraguan Society*

*En el principio, al comienzo de todo,
Nicaragua estaba vacía.
Vacía de gente, pues.
Había tierra y había lagos, lagunas y ríos.
Y muchos ojos de agua.
Pero no había mujeres ni hombres para mirarlos.⁷*

María López Vigil, *Un güegüe me contó*, 1989

In this chapter I discuss the history, culture, and everyday reality of Nicaraguan society. I begin by presenting the turbulent political history of the country and the economic and political situation in the 21st century. I then move on to introduce the Nicaraguan educational system to give a clearer picture of the educational framework of the students who participated in this study.

Un País de Poetas: Divided by Politics, Unified by Poetry

Nicaragua has been called a country of poets, and this is very true. *Tertulias*, social gatherings revolving around literature and poetry, are a long-standing tradition in Latin America, as well as in Nicaragua. Poetry is something many Nicaraguans cultivate in their everyday life, whether reading it or writing it themselves, and it often relates to the everyday struggles and politics of the country. To present a few examples: the foreword of my master's thesis (Pääkkönen 2011a) was a poem written by a close friend of mine, a young Nicaraguan father discussing his feelings about the current situation of his country. Among professional Nicaraguan writers, Ernesto Cardenal⁸ told in his interview for *El País* (2015) that a poem he presented at an annual poetry festival in 2015 directly critiqued the interoceanic canal plan

⁷ At the start, in the beginning of everything, Nicaragua was empty. Empty of people, I mean. There was land and there were lakes, lagoons and rivers, and many waterholes. But there were no women or men to look at them.

⁸ Cardenal is a Catholic priest, a poet, writer and a former FSLN Minister of Culture of Nicaragua (1965-1977). Cardenal left the party in 1994 and has criticized its authoritarian direction under Daniel Ortega.

President Ortega made with a Chinese business man Wang Jing. Another iconic figure, former revolutionary commander Victor Tirado Lopez⁹ retired from public affairs and founded a restaurant called Café de Poetas in Managua, where weekly gatherings of poetry enthusiasts take place. Thus, the political divisions of the country are expressed through one of the unifying factors of the common culture: poetry.

Nicaraguan writers and poets present the history of their country in fascinating and rich ways through their writing. In a storybook for children of how the Nicaraguans came to be (López Vigil 1989), it is told that one morning years and years ago a grandfather called Chepe-Nepej woke up in ancient Managua screaming “Quiero pinol!”.¹⁰ And even though no one at the time even knew what corn was, let alone *pinol*, the old man kept screaming and screaming for it. And so intense was his fury and his need for *pinol* that all the Managuans fled and the confusion it created was so great that even the lake and the volcanoes surrounding the city got disturbed. While the Managuans ran, the three volcanoes started spitting lava, and as the people ran toward the lake they left their footprints by Acahualinca, where they remain to be seen today.

The footprints mentioned in the children’s storybook are kept today in a small museum in Managua.¹¹ The footprints of approximately 10 men, women and children were discovered by accident in 1874. The age and origin of the tracks, estimated to range from 6500 to 2120BP, has created controversy (Lockley et al. 2009: 55-69). Whether the people were fleeing a volcano eruption or just gathering food by the lake remains a topic of discussion. Nevertheless, the signs of the steps of the people who inhabited the area ages ago are impressive. The footprints also tell a story of what used to be where now the crowded capital of Nicaragua lies. Before the Spanish conquistadors arrived, Nicaragua was inhabited by indigenous groups of South American and Mesoamerican origin. The initial contact with the Spanish was not without violence. A legendary chief Diriangen, mentioned also in the song cited in the introduction of this study, raised his people to arms against the invaders. However, in 1524 the

⁹ Tirado Lopez is originally from Mexico. He joined the FSLN during the revolution years and has later criticized Ortega and his government especially on the economic decisions made under Ortega’s rule. He gave me an interview in Café de Poetas in 2012, and told me that after facing harsh public critique for what he had to say he had decided to retire from the public eye and that the interview with me was an exception to the rule.

¹⁰ *Pinol*, pinole or *pinollilo* (from Nahuatl pinolli ‘cornmeal’ or ‘maize flour’) is a traditional drink made of ground, toasted corn and cacao. It is usually mixed with milk and sweetened with sugar. Many Nicaraguans enjoy the beverage with breakfast and throughout the day. These days you can also buy bags of *pinolillo instante*, ready to mix pinolillo, from the supermarkets.

¹¹ <https://vianica.com/sp/atractivo/36/museo-huellas-de-acahualinca>

Spanish imposed their control over the region, and the existing indigenous population of around one million was reduced to just tens of thousands within a few decades (Vanden and Prevost 2012: 538).

Another legacy of the colonial period is the long-standing political conflict in which lie part of the roots of today's political divisions. Nicaragua has a long history of political turbulence, and politics are discussed on a daily basis. To understand Nicaraguan society, it is essential to understand the political disputes of the past, since they form a large part of the daily lives of Nicaraguans even today. The political division of the country is rooted in a historical dispute between the liberal and conservative elites that dates all the way back to colonization times. When the Spanish conquistadors established their rule in Nicaragua they divided the governance of the country between two cities: Granada and León. Granada was populated by the aristocratic class, while León was inhabited by colonizers of lower social status. León, however, became the administrative capital, and the rivalry that followed boiled into open warfare. By the time Nicaragua emerged as a sovereign state, the Leonese had identified themselves as 'liberals' and the Grenadinos as 'conservatives,' and the chaos created due to the rivalry of the two cities opened the doors to foreign interference (Vanden and Prevost 2012: 539).

Throughout the history of Nicaragua, foreign interference has been a permanent feature of the politics of the country. Nicaragua's geographic position has sparked international interest since the 1800s. The country is located between two oceans. The biggest lake in Central America, Lake Nicaragua, or Cocibolca, is situated in the center of the country. The lake could offer an interoceanic route for large ships, an option now sold to the Chinese by the government of President Ortega. Maritime routes of Central and South America were an interest of the Spanish conquistadors already in the 1500s (Murra 2002: 25-39), and a canal route through Nicaragua has continued to spark foreign interest ever since. In 1849, the United States negotiated a deal with Nicaragua to build a canal through the country. Due to internal tensions in Nicaragua the canal was later built in Panama. At the end of the 1800s liberal president José Santos Zelaya opened new negotiations with Germany and Japan to continue the canal project. Mainly to avoid competition the United States supported a conservative rebellion in 1909 and ended up occupying the country's Atlantic coast until 1933 (Valtonen 2001: 326–339). The greatest legend of Nicaraguan politics was born during the U.S. occupation. Augusto César Sandino, the man who today's governing party FSLN is named after, led a group of workers driven by anti-imperialism to fight against the U.S. intervention (Pérez Brignoli 1989: 112–113).¹² When the occupation ended, the

¹² For an in-depth biography of Augusto Sandino, see e.g. Wunderlich 1995.

new government offered Sandino and his troops a pardon. Sandino turned the offer down, and demanded that the National Guard trained by the United States during the occupation should be disbanded. On February 21st, 1934, about a year after the occupation had ended, soldiers of the National Guard, following orders of their leader Anastasio Somoza, killed Sandino and his soldiers as they were leaving the negotiations (Wünderich 1995: 362–367). President Juan Bautista Sacasa did not have the means to interfere and Nicaragua fell under the dictatorship of the Somoza family (Valtonen 2001: 326–339).

The events that have molded Nicaragua into the country it is today are closely linked to the international tensions of the Cold War. The Somoza dictatorship received support from the United States mainly due to the loyalty it showed to the United States government (Anderson and Dodd 2005: 1.) On the other hand, the leftist popular revolution that overthrew the dictatorship in 1979 had close ties to socialism. The 1979 revolution was made possible by a complex web of factions and alliances (Valtonen 2001: 334–337).¹³ After the revolution, the largest of the alliances took power, and named themselves after the anti-imperialist hero Augusto Sandino as Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN). During the revolution, Nicaragua's economic situation had collapsed, and the people were deeply divided due to different opinions on how to move forward. When the FSLN seized power they adopted the ideals of equality and democracy (Angel and Macintosh 1987:16–17) and Daniel Ortega became the president for the first time. The peace did not last for long, however. Internal disputes and foreign interference, mainly due to Ronald Reagan's government's fear of communism, led to a civil war that only ended in 1990. Alongside Angola and Afghanistan, Nicaragua was one of the countries where the power play of the Soviet Union and the United States led to armed conflicts (Herrmann 2004: 59–67).

¹³ For an analysis of the ideologies behind the revolution, see e.g. Hodges 1986. For memoirs of the revolution by the revolutionaries, see e.g. Belli 2000, Cabezas 2007, Cardenal 2003, Ramírez 1999.



Picture 2. Sandino and his images are still present in the everyday life of Nicaraguans. An image of Sandino along with a revolutionary text in FSLN's revolution-time colors painted on the wall of a house in San Juan del Sur, 2011.

The civil war left deep scars with many families. Most of the fathers of my childhood friends had been *en las montañas*, in the mountains, meaning they fought against the U.S.-supported Contras. FSLN lost the elections in 1990 to a right-wing coalition called Unión Nacional Opositora (UNO) (Valtonen 2001: 337–338). Many said the main reason for UNO's success was that people were tired of the war. A former Sandinista revolutionary I interviewed in 2011¹⁴ said: Us mothers we grew tired of it [the war]. First it was our husbands and us, then it was our sons. People wanted it to stop.¹⁵

Even though reasons such as those stated above have surely played a part, according to Schatz and Gutiérrez (2002: 131) almost 50% of non-affiliated voters in the 1990 election explained the loss of

¹⁴ The interview was originally made for a newspaper article published in global.finland.fi. The interviewee has given her consent to use the interview for this study. The interviewee wished to remain anonymous, thus her name and the exact location of the interview is not given.

¹⁵ *Female, born 1961*. Original in Spanish: Nosotras las madres lleguemos a ser cansadas a eso. Primero nuestros esposos y nosotras mismas, después nuestros hijos. La gente quería que se pare.

FSLN largely in economic terms. However, the numbers are reversed if the political affiliation of the respondent is taken into account: 53% of UNO sympathizers cited political reasons, such as not wanting to live under the totalitarian rule of the FSLN. Economic reasons may have played a role for these respondents as well, since after the elections the U.S. government provided Nicaragua with a two-year USD 541 million package to support UNO's neoliberal reform (Bickham Mendez 2005: 30).

Whether the reasons behind the voting decision were economic, political or something in between, the 1990 elections left the country as divided as it had been during the previous years. Before handing over the power to UNO, the FSLN assigned significant amounts of state property to party leaders (Booth et al. 2006: 88–89). This is commonly referred to as *la piñata*, after the decorated, candy-filled container that is broken open at the end of children's parties. La piñata is a very accurate description of Nicaraguan politics in general, since politics in Nicaragua has traditionally been an easy way to become wealthy. Many feel that the governing elite mainly thinks of their own benefits rather than the future of the country. Corruption has flourished regardless of whether the party governing the nation has been right- or left-wing (Álvarez Montalván 2008: 115–119). Throughout this history the underlining factor in Nicaraguan politics remains corruption, electoral disputes and accusations of fraud. Emilio Álvarez Montalván (2008: 89), a former Foreign Minister of Nicaragua, describes the political culture of his country: "The one who rules, rules and does not make mistakes; and if he does, he still returns to rule."¹⁶

Since 1990, Nicaragua has seen three right-wing governments and the return to power of Daniel Ortega. Even though Nicaraguans are and have always been deeply divided by politics, the common culture of the country is very much shared and cherished by all Nicaraguans. Poetry, music and food play a central part in the Nicaraguan culture, and when the legendary Godoy brothers¹⁷ take out their guitars and play the songs they wrote during the 1979 revolution, pretty much everybody sings along. All Nicaraguans who share a common pride in their literary heritage celebrate the poetry of Rubén Darío, a Nicaraguan poet often seen as the founder of modernism that flourished at the end of the 19th century. Literature and poetry penetrates the political life as well, since many of the former revolution leaders have later dedicated themselves to writing.

¹⁶ Original in Spanish: Quien manda, manda y no se equivoca; y si se equivoca, vuelve a mandar.

¹⁷ Carlos and Luís Enrique Mejía Godoy are Nicaraguan musicians and composers whose songs became associated with the revolution and the worker's movements in the 1970s. They remain influential in the Nicaraguan cultural scene and were recently honored with the Order of Rubén Darío, Nicaragua's highest cultural distinction.



Picture 3. The Island of Ometepe is situated in Lake Nicaragua, where interoceanic canal plans have been taking place.

Today a growing number of Nicaraguans have immigrated abroad. Most Nicaraguan immigrants leaving the country head to Costa Rica or the United States (Unicef Migration Profiles 2013), and many families have at least one relative living abroad.¹⁸ Nicaraguans living abroad also cherish the culture of their home country. These days, national identity is celebrated and also stated online; for example, a U.S.-based webstore Pinolero, a name meaning someone who loves *pinol*, posts daily Nicaragua-themed video clips and pictures of Nicaraguans living in the United States on the social media site Instagram for almost 74,000 followers.¹⁹ The store also offers worldwide delivery for clothing with texts such as ‘Miami Nica,’ ‘CaliForNica’ or ‘Me vale verga,’ a common Nicaraguan slang expression meaning you really don’t care. One of the most popular products is a baseball cap asking, ‘Got Cacao?’ the beverage cherished by Nicaraguans.

¹⁸ For an in-depth analysis of Nicaraguan immigrants and national identity formation in Costa Rica, see e.g. Sandoval García 2006.

¹⁹ www.pinolero.com, www.instagram.com/pinolero_com

Internet and social media has opened windows through which many rural Nicaraguans get to see bits and pieces of the world far away. The expression 'window' is chosen for a reason here, since that is what is offered to most young Nicaraguans, who peek through a window to see what might be, while the doors to reach these opportunities remain closed. Mass media and the Internet allow people to see bits and pieces of the possibilities the world has to offer, and these images enter into their everyday social lives (Appadurai 1996: 54). Yet, even though Nicaraguan students can follow the events of the world, and all the opportunities the world can offer through the news or online, their economic and political realities restrict their global mobility. Most young Nicaraguans continue to struggle with both the political and economic everyday realities of their country, which I discuss further in the next section.

Coffee with Socialism: Nicaraguan Politics and Economy in the 21st Century

Nicaragua is a country where the political power has been centered in the hands of the same people since the days of the 1979 revolution. Nicaragua is also a very poor country. The global shifts in the economy and in politics have greatly affected the country's economy, as Nicaragua has gotten politically and economically closer to countries such as Venezuela and China after Daniel Ortega of the FSLN returned to power in the presidential election of October 2006. Nicaragua is a presidential democratic republic, meaning that the president is both the head of state and the head of the government. Even though the FSLN officially returned to power only in 2006, the party and especially President Ortega have been deeply involved in Nicaraguan politics during the FSLN's opposition years as well. Many of the pacts made between the governing parties and the FSLN during the 1990s centralized power into the hands of leading politicians, including Ortega, and has led to the deterioration of the civil society (Booth et al. 2006: 91).

Nicaragua has relied heavily on international economic assistance, but the limitations of civil rights by the current government as well as electoral obscurities have driven away several foreign donors. Civil rights were already limited before the 2006 elections, when Nicaragua accepted a law that banned abortion in all circumstances. Even though the abortion law is not a central topic of this study, it was an important event when considering the country's international relations, since the law sparked heated debates in Nicaragua, as well as internationally, and led many international donors to withdraw their support. The FSLN's congress members voted unanimously in favor of the law, and Daniel Ortega's wife, Rosario Murillo, who describes herself as a devoted Catholic, noticeably supported the abortion ban (Kampwirth 2008: 2-3). I also wish to bring out the abortion law since my study does discuss gender. When I conducted my research for my master's thesis this law was a new event and many of the students mentioned it. Thus, I expected it might well be a theme that the participants would bring up in this study as well. However, the theme only came up in a few of the interviews, and this made me realize that I had made assumptions based on my own experiences. I discuss this further in Chapter 10.

What did come up in almost all the interviews was the economic situation of the country. During the last few years, suspicions about electoral fraud, President Ortega's political ties, and the weak rule of law have left their mark on the country's economic situation. The economic and political changes occurring in Latin America in general are also seen in Nicaragua. Structural economic characteristics of the region such as high income inequality, high levels of income concentration and poor protection for workers

(Maurizio 2013: 3-5) are very real problems for many Nicaraguans. Latin America experienced a positive economic cycle in the beginning of the 2000s. However, by 2016 the regional unemployment rate had increased to levels not seen even during the international financial crisis of 2008-2009 (ILO 2016: 11). The region continues to struggle with high unemployment and underemployment, as well as occupational precariousness and informality. As Maurizio (2013: 3) points out, even though occupational informality is a problem throughout throughout the Caribbean and the whole of Central and South America, there are important differences across countries. According to ILO's statistics from 2010, in Chile and Argentina the proportion of independent workers was about 25% while this value reaches 40% or more in Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, Colombia, Honduras and Nicaragua. This context affects especially certain vulnerable groups of workers, among them women, youths, and ethnic minorities (Maurizio 2013: 3).



Picture 4. Young man selling beans in Mercado Oriental, Managua 2013. The rising prices of basic groceries has been a common concern in Nicaragua over the last few years.

When Latin America became tied to the Western economic system during the 16th century, most of the local economies of the countries revolved around one export crop. In Central America foreign crops coffee, originating from Africa, and bananas, originating from Asia, became the prime export crop in the 19th and 20th centuries (Vanden and Prevost 2012: 153).²⁰ In the case of Nicaragua, coffee and meat used to be the major exports of the country. However, by 2015, knit T-shirts and insulated wire have bypassed coffee and meat as export products and the major import has been petroleum (WTO 2015). Furthermore, Ortega's government has tightened Nicaragua's ties to Venezuela. In 2007 Nicaragua became a member of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA)²¹ and has been receiving discounted oil from Venezuela at low prices. The collapse of the Venezuelan economy has thus had an effect on Nicaragua as well. Another international collaboration has been the interoceanic canal deal the Nicaraguan government secretly made in 2013 with Chinese businessman Wang Jing. The treaty itself as well as the way it was made has caused constant arguments among Nicaraguans, as well as several public demonstrations against the canal plan.

Writing in 2008, Javier Corrales²² pointed out that Ortega's rise to power follows a trend that has been increasingly apparent in Latin America since the 1980s: the rise to power of former presidents or political newcomers. Corrales has suggested that the consequences of this phenomenon – deinstitutionalization and division of voters – might prove to be destructive to the functioning of a democracy (Corrales 2008: 1-3). This certainly seems to be the case in Nicaragua. In 2009 President Ortega won an injunction that freed him from constitutional prohibition of immediate re-election (Close 2016: 28) and has since been elected President both in 2011 and 2016. International poll watchers were not allowed to monitor the vote on either of the elections and accusations of fraud were heard from several electoral districts. As I am writing this text, Daniel Ortega has renewed his presidency in the 2016 elections and his wife Rosario Murillo has become Vice President. The governing party's power reaches to all institutions and especially the public services, including the jobs in the public sector that are completely controlled by the FSLN. As Close (2016: 28-30) points out, by the 2016 elections the Sandinistas have governed the country for twenty-one of the thirty-seven years

²⁰ For more information on the history of coffee production in Nicaragua, see e.g. Charlip 2003. Fair trade coffee production in Nicaragua has been investigated by Finnish scholars, see e.g. Valkila 2014.

²¹ When Nicaragua joined in 2009 the name was the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas.

²² Corrales is Associate Professor and Chair of Political Science at Amherst College. He has specialized in the politics of economic and policy reform in Latin America.

since the 1979 revolution, and Nicaragua today looks uncomfortably like Nicaragua before the revolution (Close 2016: 13).²³

²³ Close also presents an analysis of Nicaraguan regimes from 1979 to 2016, well summarized in Close 2016: 22.

Studying in Nicaragua

The economic and political situation of the country affects especially young Nicaraguans. Nicaragua is demographically a young nation; approximately 50% of the country's population being under 24 years of age (Index Mundi 2016a). In 2014, approximately 32% of the population was 15 years old or younger (PRB World Population Data Sheet 2014). Even though Nicaragua's economic growth levels have been higher than in many other countries in Latin America, poverty remains high and access to basic services is a daily challenge in many parts of the country (World Bank 2016). Unemployment and underemployment are common problems, and education no longer guarantees steady employment. This phenomenon, familiar also in Europe, is seen not just in Nicaragua, but also in the whole of Latin America. Youth unemployment in Latin America has increased more than adult unemployment, reaching 18.3% in 2016 (ILO 2016: 12). At the same time, increasing numbers of young people, especially among the female population, have gained access to higher levels of education over the last two decades. This has created a paradox in the society, since the level of unemployment remains high in this age group. Thus, universities have been producing unemployed youth with higher levels of education (Welti 2002: 279).

I have not been able to find reliable statistics for the percentage of university students in Nicaragua. This is partly due to the fact that the Nicaraguan university network is very fragmented, and many of the small private universities are not monitored by any official organization. Consejo Nacional de Universidades (CNU), a governing organization of higher education in Nicaragua reports that the 10 universities that belong to the organization have approximately 114,000 students (CNU 2017).²⁴ I approached the universities that do not belong to CNU to get more information on the number of the students but they were unwilling to give me any specific information.

The Nicaraguan educational system is divided into the private and the public sector, and basically three grades: *primaria*, *secundaria*, and *universidad*. Vocational education is quite rare, and in everyday speech it is often referred to as *universidad*. Students usually enroll to university at the age of 16-17. Primary undergraduate degree is a 4- to 5-year *licenciado* and further opportunities include a 2-year graduate *maestría*. The usual study time for a *licenciado* tends to be from four to five years, but interruptions in studies are common due to several variables affecting the students' everyday lives. Studies can be

²⁴ The member universities of CNU are UNI, UCA, UNAN-León, UPOLI, UNAN Managua, UNA, UNIAV, UCATSE, BICU and URACCAN.

interrupted due to economic circumstances, such as inability to pay tuition or course material fees. A family's economic situation may require all the members of the family to work instead of concentrating on studying. Caring for siblings or grandparents, aiding at the family business, and in rural areas the need for a workforce during harvesting periods can also interrupt studies.

The students' social hierarchy affects their economic situation greatly since grants for studies are more available to some than others due to Nicaragua's political environment and widespread corruption: according to my material, family ties to university personnel or a family member's high position in the ruling party usually make access to full-time grants more easy than good study performance. According to several conversations I have observed during my fieldwork, in some cases entrance examinations can even be bypassed by the use of bribes.

Studying in a public university is in theory free, although students pay tuition and study material fees. In the private sector the costs range from about 40 dollars to 200 dollars a month, depending on the university and the main subject studied. This may seem a small amount, but considering that the average salary of many Nicaraguans is around 270 dollars a month, the fees for private universities are very high.²⁵ Thus, studying at a private university without a scholarship is impossible for many. Among poorer families, even the smaller public university fees may be impossible without a full scholarship.

Scholarships to private universities are awarded by the deans of these universities, while public universities scholarships are closely tied to the student organization Unión Nacional de Estudiantes Nicaragüenses (UNEN). The UNEN operates under the FSLN, and thus it is a commonly known fact that if you are not a party member or do not favor the party, you are most likely not eligible for a scholarship at the public universities. Alongside of these issues come some very concrete difficulties presented by the country's economic situation and infrastructure. Corruption is found in private universities as well. Many of my informants mentioned that money can sometimes buy access to education. One of the participants in this study explained how the possibility of going to university is often linked to knowing the right people, and not to the academic scores of the applicant:

²⁵ The 270-dollar average salary is estimated from Trading Economics (2016). The Nicaraguan Ministry of Labor (Mitrab 2016) has regulated minimum wages to a slightly higher level than this. However, it is practically impossible to estimate a real average salary level, since many Nicaraguans work in the informal sector. Most of my friends working full time in the private or informal sector earn around 200-300 dollars a month.

There is a lot of crime right now in the country, and there are ways of going to university but ... there is a limited number of places, and places are already tied up, I don't know how to explain to you ... for example, if I want to go to a certain university I talk to someone I know, and so secure a place, while other people who maybe need it and take the exams and get better academic scores do not get in.²⁶

I noticed the same thing the participants of this study brought up when a daughter of a friend of mine received a full scholarship to one of the private universities on account of her excellent test scores. A few weeks before she was supposed to begin her studies the university informed her that she no longer had the scholarship. When the family called around, it turned out that relatives of one of the deans of the university had asked for a scholarship for their child, and so the scholarship had simply been moved to another student. Patronage practices are deeply embedded in the Latin American political culture and administration, and have generated wealth for those controlling these systems (Grindle 2012: 141-143). These practices and corruption are seen in Nicaraguan society as well, and according to my material and field notes they penetrate the academic sphere as well. These kinds of practices obviously do not strengthen young people's trust in society.

Many students who come from the rural areas have difficulties in paying for accommodation in the university city, and thus they travel daily from outside the city. Transportation from the rural areas can take hours due to bad road conditions, which get worse during the rainy season. A few months prior to the collection of my data, Nicaraguan bus drivers went on strike, meaning that hundreds of students were unable to attend their classes and their studies were delayed. The country also suffers from breaks in electricity,²⁷ causing difficulty for many students. One of the participants told how his studies had to be delayed for over a year since he was unable to pay for accommodation in Managua, where he studied, and he had to travel several hours every day from his home to the university. By the time he got home the generator of his house had already stopped functioning and the lights were out for the rest of the night, so he was often unable to do the required homework. He chose to leave his studies until he found suitable accommodation in Managua. Another participant had the same problem and ended up

²⁶ *Male H9, born 1986-1992*. Original in Spanish: Allí ahorita hay bastante delincuencia en el país, y hay posibilidades para entrar a una la universidad pero... son cupos limitados, y los cupos limitados que hay ya son como amarrados, no se como explicarte...por ejemplo yo quiero entrar a esa universidad y hablo con alguien más a quien conozco, y ya tengo guardado un cupo, y otras personas que si tal vez lo necesitan y hacen exámenes y tienen las mejores notas no pasan.

²⁷ Nicaragua has the lowest electricity generation in Central America and largely depends on oil for electricity generation. Electricity cuts occur regularly, and a large number of the population does not have access to electricity.

changing university first on account of difficulties concerning distance and electricity breaks, then due to the high payments of the private university. He explained his situation as follows:

Look, I'll tell you a little bit about myself. I started to study for a bachelor's degree on rural development in 2005. I gave up in 2006 ... the university is full time, from 8 in the morning until 5 in the afternoon every day and I come from a village down south, and to go [to the university] I traveled every day. In that time, I don't know ... maybe you remember or maybe you noticed that there were blackouts in Nicaragua. And so I would arrive at my village, and there was no light. I had no time to study so I changed my studies and went to study engineering at UCA. I was there for two years...there you would pay 100 dollars per course and with some the materials cost 600 dollars per course. So last year, August, I returned to the Agrarian University.²⁸

As presented above, the Nicaraguan students have to navigate some very real and complex situations on a daily basis in order to move forward with their studies. Studying, among some other activities, is often related to a certain period of life we tend to call youth. However, how we define youth in different societies is a far more complex question. Does the definition differ whether the person is studying or working? Does the period we call youth look the same in Nicaragua and in some other countries, and who decides who is young? These are among the central topics of youth studies and are some of my main interests. In the next two chapters I discuss these questions further in the light of my research questions and present the theoretical framework of this study.

²⁸ *Male, H9, born 1986-1992*. Original in Spanish: Mira, te voy a hablar un poco de mí. Yo inicié el 2005 para estudiar licenciatura de desarrollo rural, me renuncie el 2006 por motivos de...la universidad el de horario completo, de 8 de la mañana hasta 5 de la tarde todos los días y yo soy de un pueblo que en el sur, y al hecho irme yo viajaba todos los días. En ese momento, no sé...tal vez te acordes o tal vez te distes cuenta que había unos apagones en ese momento en Nicaragua. Y entonces yo llegaba a mi pueblo y no había luz, no tenía tiempo de estudiar entonces yo cambié carrera y fui a estudiar ingeniería en la UCA, allí estuve dos años... y allí se pagaba demasiado, se pagaba 100 dólares por clase y con cierta materia 600 dólares por clase, entonces el año pasado, el agosto, volví a Universidad Agraria.

3. 'The Youth Question': Key Concepts and Defining Questions in the Field of Youth Studies

*Juventud, divino tesoro,
¡ya te vas para no volver!
Cuando quiero llorar, no lloro...
y a veces lloro sin querer.*²⁹

Rubén Darío, Canción de otoño en primavera, 1905

One of the central research questions of this study is related to the existing research and frameworks of youth studies, specifically what kind of hierarchies can be seen between the experiences of students and the assumptions made by the existing research and frameworks. Thus, it is essential to discuss some of the key concepts and current topics of discussion in the field of youth studies. I reflect on these themes in the analysis of my own material throughout this study. I begin by presenting the difficulties youth studies scholars face when defining what is youth. I then move on to discuss questions of structure and agency, which in the field of youth studies relates to questions of socialization and class mobility, concepts that are relevant in understanding the choices and opportunities of Nicaraguan students. In the last part of the chapter, I comment on the rise of the generational approach that has provoked both criticism and praise among scholars during recent years and discuss its connection in the field of Latin American youth studies. As we shall see, defining what is youth, and what implications come with the chosen definition is a far more complex question than biological age.

What is Youth and How and Why Study it?

Since the focus of this study is young Nicaraguan students and their experiences, discussions of how youth is defined in this study, what is youth and how youth studies as an academic field approaches the question are central to the theme. The underlining question behind all research on young people is what is this period we call 'youth' in the life course? The title of this chapter, 'The Youth Question,' as

²⁹ Youth, divine treasure. Already leaving to never to return! When I wish to cry, I don't ... And sometimes I cry not wanting to.

used by Côte³⁰ (2014a), refers to this fundamental question in the field of youth studies. What is 'youth'? Is it 'real' and how should it be defined? Is it a developmental stage or an age-status defined by culture? Since youth studies is a maturing multidisciplinary field of overlapping disciplines such as cultural studies, sociology, anthropology and psychology, the answers to these questions tend to vary accordingly.

In everyday speech, when we talk about young people and youth we tend to follow a certain kind of common idea of what it is to be young and what youth is. For example, in Europe, the United States and Australia the term 'youth' is usually associated with freedom, searching for yourself and your own way of being, and maybe even rebellion. This period of life is often seen to include such activities as taking part in peer group and student activities. In general, we tend to see youth as a phase in which one finds one's place in society, and a phase of experimentation free from the burdens of adult life, such as work. However, the connotations of the term and what is understood to be associated with this life phase vary across the globe. According to Furlong (2013: 1-3), youth is a socially constructed intermediary phase that is not defined chronologically as a stage that could be tied to a specific age, nor linked to specific activities, and it is defined differently across time and between societies. In this study, I define youth as an age status imposed by cultural expectations. I also agree with Furlong (2013: 1-3) that youth is essentially a period of semi-dependence, constructed differently across time and between societies. Having said that, and in the light of my results, it must be kept in mind that what we see as semi-dependence is culturally related and constructed.

One of the questions this study wishes to address is the societal experiences of Nicaraguan students. When we categorize youth and young people we also create a certain kind of view of the society we live in. Young people are often seen as a problem or as a solution. Whether we like it or not, research conducted on youth shapes the way young people are seen in a society. In the English language literature on Central American and Nicaraguan youth crime and violence are often emphasized above everything else.³¹ Outside the academic sphere of life we may, without analyzing it much deeper, represent youth as a hope for the future, a force for change, or as a problem posing a threat to the established order. We may also repeat stereotypes we see as truthful or even universal, even though they

³⁰ James Côte is a Full Professor of Sociology at the University of Western Ontario. He has contributed especially to the fields of the sociology of youth, identity formation, and higher education studies.

³¹ For an exception to this, see Harlow 2012, 2016, who researched social media and youth activism in Guatemala and El Salvador.

have been disputed a long time ago. In general, many of our images of what happens during the period we call youth are based on the image of teenagers in the United States, Canada and Europe, an idea that even in Western societies is a relatively new phenomenon.³² The term ‘adolescence’ was first introduced into Western societies by Stanley Hall (1904). Hall saw what he referred to as ‘adolescence’ as a genetically based phase that involved ‘storm and stress’; risky behavior, contesting older authorities and genetically based mood swings.

In reality, what happens during the period of life we call ‘youth’ and the societal definitions of this period vary across the world (Brown and Larson 2002: 2-5). Côté (2014a: 12) underlines that: “This uncertainty of knowledge is reflected in the historical and cross-cultural variability in how young people are identified by the language of the place and time.” What is included in this period of life and the cultural and societal meanings of the phase of life we call ‘youth’ is also reflected in the language used in each society: in some languages such as Chinese and Japanese, there is no general term to designate the period of adolescence as a whole (Brown and Larson 2002: 5). Thus, the meanings we attach to the term ‘youth’ and what this phase includes are strongly tied to culture and society. It should also be kept in mind that young people’s experiences within a society are extremely diverse and vary in relation to class, gender and education, among other things, and it is not necessarily desirable to generalize them (Miles 2000: 1).

The assumption that people at a certain age are prone to risky behavior and rebellion and controlled by their raging hormones is one of the universal beliefs about young people that still endures among the general public and the media alike, an image sometimes seen in the Nicaraguan media and public conversations as well. The Nicaraguan print media has not referred frequently to youth violence, yet the images of the *maras* of El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala are often attached to Nicaraguan *pandillas*. Peetz (2011: 1459-1498) argues that due to the existing discourses on youth and violence, in some countries of Central America the entire young generation is socially constructed as a threat to society at large. In some cases, the laws intended to control youth gangs and their violence have mainly been a tool for political parties to gain electoral advance, as Wolf (2012: 36-63) suggests is the case with El Salvador’s *mano dura* policy. In Nicaragua images of youth violence and young people posing a

³² The youth phase, an intermediate stage between childhood and adulthood, is commonly associated with the rise of Western modernity, which only emerged from the 1800s onward (Cieslik and Simpson 2013: 1). The word *teenager* was coined by marketers in the United States less than 100 years ago when they were looking for ways to increase consumption patterns of this age group (Côté and Allahar 2006).

threat to social order are also used to legitimize the ruling parties power. In a recent study by Weegel (2018: 861-877) it is noted that Nicaraguans most watched TV shows portray police officers as heroic while stigmatizing juvenile delinquents. It is worth noting that the Nicaraguan police force is controlled by the FSLN, thus TV images of heroic police officers serving their country help polish the ruling party's public image.

As discussed here, the images we attach to youth have very real effects and consequences in the societies we live in. The idea of youth as a period controlled by genetics and turmoil, first proposed by Hall (1904), has had a significant impact in youth studies and on how we view young people in general (Côté 2014a: 56). Interestingly, anthropologist Margaret Mead argued for a completely different view in *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928). She reported findings that were contradictory to the idea that adolescence is a turbulent period of life. Mead also observes village-to-village variation in Samoa on the age in that children are classed as adults (Mead 1928: 64), a result that supports the idea that youth is not merely a developmental phase that can be easily defined by biology. It is worth noting that the assumptions we make of youth are also strongly based on the family model of modern capitalist societies, and anthropological research such as Evans-Pritchard's (1960) groundbreaking work among the Nuer has revealed kinship system and family groups that differ greatly from what we often consider to be 'the family.'

In the academic field of youth studies assumptions such as the ones mentioned above have close ties to relevant issues and debates in the field. In this study, I discuss youth transitions in the Nicaraguan perspective; specifically, the expectations and hopes that students related to the transition from studies to the labor market. Since we are focusing on a certain period in life, clearly we are also discussing change. For many researchers, change tends to center on transitions from one status to another (Furlong 2013: 6). Youth researchers from different backgrounds commonly use the term 'the life course' when discussing transitions and experiences. As mentioned earlier, life course theory has been developed in the work of Glen Elder (1974, 1994, 1998a, 1998b).³³ He places individuals' experiences within a context that is both dynamic and linked to the lives of others. The key principals of his theory are historical time and place, the timing of lives, linked or interdependent lives, and human agency in constrained settings (Elder 1998a: 5). Even though Elder's key principals still underpin studies on transitions to adulthood, researchers have developed them further (see e.g. Heinz 2009) and some

³³ The term 'the life course' should be separated from the term 'lifecycle,' which is essentially a positivistic approach where age-related experiences are seen as linear (Furlong 2013: 6).

researchers have contested the entire idea of transitions. The changes which have taken place in modern societies have made researching youth a lot more difficult, since defining what is included in this stage of life has become complex and fragmented (see e.g. Arnett 2004, Furlong 2013, Heinz 2009, Keniston 1968, Tanner 2006). Young people spend longer periods of time in education, studies may be interrupted, as is the case with many of the students who participated in this research, and due to changes in the labor market many young people depend on their parents for longer periods of time. Many events in the lives of the young do not follow the traditional patterns. Thus, some scholars have pointed out that age is no longer the only defining factor in youth. Heinz (2009: 3) notes that the social age markers which used to define transitions have lost their normative force, and Wyn and White (1997: 9, original italics) point out that “Youth is problematic largely because *adult status is problematic.*”

Due to the changes in modern societies, researchers have sought to find new ways of theorizing the youth phase. One of the most influential suggestions has been developmental psychologist Jeffrey Arnett’s proposal of ‘emerging adulthood’ (Arnett 2004, 2014). Arnett’s concept of emerging adulthood has been applied in a study conducted in Argentina, where most participants declared they felt they were in between adolescence and adulthood (Facio et al. 2007: 115-188). My research is not straightforwardly comparable to the research conducted in Argentina, since Facio et al. (2007: 115-118) framed the nature of emerging adulthood as the central question of their research and thus already assumed the existence of such a period. However, not all young people embrace these proposed new ‘phases’ (see e.g. Flacks 2007). Even though my interview questions did not include questions specifically designed to discuss development periods, my material shows that the students who participated in this study did not wish to embrace any specific in-between statuses.

Arnett’s proposal is intriguing in the sense that it takes into consideration the cultural changes experienced in many societies. Nevertheless, his model has been criticized for placing agency over structure (see e.g. Bynner 2005, Côté 2014b, Schoon and Schoolenberg 2013). The debate related to agency and structure is one of the central topics in the field of youth studies, since youth studies scholars often discuss structure-agency positions. This is also a relevant discussion in the light of my research questions, since the choices the Nicaraguan students make are often constrained by the situation of the society surrounding them. I discuss these questions of structure and agency further in the next section.

'Free Will,' Social Structures and Cultural Institutions: Structure vs. Agency

One of the questions discussed in this study is how the Nicaraguan students position themselves in their global and local realities. The question relates strongly to their ability to make choices within the structures of the society that surrounds them. The debate on structure versus agency has a relatively long history in sociology, centering around the debate about to what extent people can exercise free choice or 'free will' in their dealings with social structures and cultural institutions (Côté 2014a: 59). Archer (1995: 65) argues that when confronting the structure and agency problem sociologists are addressing "the most pressing problem of the human condition." For Giddens, one of the authors perhaps most synonymous with this discussion, all social action involves structure and all structure involves social actions, since "social structures are both constituted by human agency, and yet at the same time are the very medium of this constitution" (Giddens 1976: 121). Bourdieu (1984) approaches the question of structure and agency through the notion of the 'habitus,' which provides a group-distinctive framework of social cognition and interpretation. For Bourdieu, culture is separate from people as individuals, and at the same time it constrains people and it is constructed through human agency. Bourdieu's notions of habitus and capital are useful tools for interpreting relations between structure and agency as well as analyzing the experiences of young people.

In the field of youth studies the most relevant issues of the debate on structure versus agency relate to questions of socialization and class mobility. This is also a central topic in the case of Nicaragua. Nicaragua is very much a class society where who you know and how your family is positioned both politically and economically has a considerable impact on the individual's opportunities in life. Many of the students who participated in this study aimed to change their social and economic conditions through studies, yet their choices are limited by social structures. As Côté states (2014a: 60), social structures responsible for socializing young people can be quite imperceptible, and in some societies structural obstacles can block mobility from one class to another or prevent a change in material conditions. On the other hand, the question of what constitutes agency is still constantly contested: Is it an inherent mental capacity, something that we learn, or a combination of nature-nurture interactions? Furlong (2009: 1) argues that in comparison to perspectives developed in the 1970s or 1980s, contemporary youth researchers tend to regard individual agency as a more significant factor, although most new models make room for reflexivity. The debate is ongoing and relates strongly to the previously mentioned discussion of conceptualizing a new phase between childhood and adulthood.

As mentioned, Arnett's (2004) proposal of emerging adulthood has faced strong criticism, placing agency over structure. Scholars have also raised questions about the definition of who is an emerging adult and who is not (see e.g. Du Bois-Reymond 2016). Arnett himself has responded to the critique by stating that it is somewhat based on the different viewpoints of sociologists and developmental psychologists (Arnett 2006: 115) and that the concept has been enlarged by pluralizing it to encompass 'emerging adulthood(s)' (Arnett 2011). According to Arnett, sociologists tend to underline structural factors, while developmental psychologists usually view the individual as an active agent. In his response, he highlights what in my opinion is one of the pressing issues in the field of youth studies, the complexities of communication and collaboration between different disciplines represented in the field.

The discussion on structure and agency, and the different approaches highlight a long-standing rift between cultural and transitional approaches. Some researchers are more interested in questions about the cultural lives of young people (such as an interest in music, fashion, etc.) and some research is driven by an interest in youth policy and transitions. These different interests and research questions create distinctive emphases in the research process that in turn shape the theory and methods used. For example, some research about youth cultures can create an image of young people as actors shaping their cultural lives, while research with a focus on policy or transitions can generate an image of young people constrained by structural forces, such as economics and political decisions (Cieslik and Simpson 2013: xi). As Côté (2014a: 218) points out, for the field to mature and develop adequate approaches academics need to recognize the limits of theories, and that in some cases the basis of the disagreements can be traced to the fact that researchers are studying different aspects of youth behaviors but with the same terminology. As for the purposes of this study, the value of the structure versus agency debate is as Miles (2000: 19) expresses it, to: "highlight the role of everyday social interactions and encounters in the construction of social worlds, while simultaneously acknowledging the way in which wider social contexts influence such interactions."

In this study, I wish to analyze the importance of both structure and agency in the lives of the young. Hence, I use the metaphor of 'pathways' to discuss the choices that students make in their study careers as they seek to transition from studies to work. Implicit in the idea of pathways is the fact that even though structural factors such as social class sometimes restrain our routes, there are various points in which people also make decisions regarding routes. Thus, the idea of pathways highlights the

importance of both structure and agency (Furlong 2013: 9), and is a useful idea as I aim to shed light on the choices that students make, and the structures that constrain these choices.

As stated previously in this chapter, during recent years, transitional perspectives have met with some criticism. Many researchers have noted how young people ‘navigate’ their transitions, and have moved away from a pre-eminent focus on structural factors such as social class, gender and ethnicity and placed greater emphasis on a biographical approach that essentially attempts to understand how individuals make sense of their lives within the dynamic processes of transitions in modern societies (Cieslick and Simpson 2013: 11). I find the idea of moving away from structural factors challenging in the context of Nicaragua, specifically due to the previously mentioned questions of class, mobility and structural constraints that affect young people from different social positions in very unequal ways. Even though the students who participated in this study do ‘navigate’ in their individual lives, their choices are very much constrained by structural factors in the society they live in. Thus, I chose to use a metaphor that highlights both individual choice and the opportunity structures of society. The criticism toward transitional models has also been one of the points of increasing interest in the generational approach, which I discuss next.

Social Generations and Change

When I began this study and started my fieldwork, my starting point was the notion of sociological generations as presented by Karl Mannheim (1952) as well as my interest in the complexities behind researching generational differences, especially in societies such as Nicaragua.³⁴ Thus, it is important to discuss the implications of this approach and why I decided to move on to another theoretical framework. Another important reason for discussing social generations is the theoretical centrality of the concept in Latin American youth studies (see e.g. Bermúdez and Martínez 2010). Latin American political history has a clear connection to the concept of sociological generations; students and young people have been a changing force in many of the events that have changed societies in the history of Latin America (Coe and Vandegrift 2015: 137). In the case of Nicaragua, the young people who participated in the 1979 revolution could be seen as sociological generation in the sense that Mannheim has described.

During the last few years the concept of ‘social generation’ has become a popular and powerful discourse especially in the field of the sociology of youth (France and Roberts 2015: 215-230). In sociological discussion, the term ‘generation’ has two meanings: it can be tied to kinship systems or to a more collective understanding of generations. The first meaning is genealogical and is mainly based on biology. This meaning of the concept has been focal especially in anthropology, the sociology of the family, life-course studies, and studies of socialization, youth and aging (Purhonen 2007: 16). According to Eisenstad (1956: 321), conceptualized like this, a (family) generation is the basic form of all age-related social organizations in all societies. In the latter meaning of the term, a generation is formed of people born during a certain period in a defined time span, often assumed not only to share the same age but some conjunctive experience that separates them from the people of other age groups. Purhonen (2007: 16) notes that it is important to keep in mind that without the characterization of conjunctive experience, a generation is synonymous with the terms age group or cohort.

Karl Mannheim separated the concept of generation from its genealogical meaning in his classic essay first published in 1928 in Germany. It rose to fame in the Anglo-American academic sphere after being translated into English as a part of his collection *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge* (Mannheim 1952).

³⁴ For a comprehensive summary of the prehistory of the concept of sociological generations, see e.g. Marías (1970/1949), Purhonen (2007: 25-35).

Mannheim moved the concept of generation to a historical continuum in which societal events and peoples' experiences of those events become focal points of analysis. According to Mannheim, a (sociological) generation is based on shared experiences, not only on the same age. Certain societal changes create a shared experience for a group of people in a generational location, meaning being born during a certain period of time. Based on this shared experience people choose to act in different ways and these actions can divide the generation into fractions; generational units. These generational units do not form separate generations, since they are glued together by shared experiences. Thus, several different and conflicting generational units may exist within a *Generationszusammenhang*, a generation as an actuality (Mannheim 1952). As Roos (2005: 210) points out, a Mannheimian generation is not a synonym for a movement. In practice, this means that a generation as an actuality may live its life without ever channeling the experiences into concrete action (Mannheim 1952: 276-320).

One of Mannheim's main interests was to find out in what kind of conditions a shared social experience and social position lead to a collective awareness and political action. This is an intriguing question. For youth studies scholars, the questions of youth activism and social experiences are of central interest. Thus, a model that aids in analyzing for example the reasons behind political mobilization is obviously a valuable tool. The main problem with Mannheim's model is that it is not a complete study or a theory but rather an abstract conceptual analysis. However, his concept of sociological generations remains a basic source in most studies discussing generations and generational experiences. As Virtanen (2001:17) states, this is not because Mannheim was able to develop such a functional conceptual model that there has been no room for criticism, but many scholars simply adopted the model as it was. Virtanen claims that Mannheim is a classic because no one has been able to "empty his fruit machine,"³⁵ even though many scholars have shown that his conceptual analysis leaves a significant number of questions unanswered. Scholars have brought up questions about how to meet Mannheim's criteria of when we can talk about a generation or should we consider a mass measured generation as suggested by Hoikkala and Paju (2008: 294). Purhonen (2007: 47-55) has pointed out that for Mannheim the central conflicts in society do not involve social class but solely age. He also notes that Mannheim never gave concrete proposals on how to empirically approach the relation of shared experiences and generational awareness (Purhonen 2005: 224-225).

³⁵ The original expression in Finnish in Virtanen 2001: 17: "Mannheim on klassikko siksi, ettei Mannheimin pajatsoa ole onnistuttu tyhjentämään." The term pajatso ('payazzo') refers to a traditional coin-operated arcade game machine.

The changes in today's societies have challenged researchers to find new ways to approach the question of generations. Edmund and Turner (2005: 559-577) have suggested that the sociology of generations should develop a concept of global generations rather than understanding generational change in national terms. Some scholars have also proposed new methodological approaches. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2009: 25-36) have proposed a new methodological approach based on the idea of global generations. In the field of youth studies the discussion on the generational approach relates to the discussion on how to define youth in rapidly changing societies. Wyn and Woodman (2006: 495-514) have contested the idea of linear development and suggested that generation offers a more effective way of conceptualizing youth and locating young people within the political, economic and cultural processes that frame their everyday lives.³⁶ Wyn and Woodman (2006: 497) argue that "to move beyond the conception of youth as transition, it is necessary to develop an understanding of how each generation is located within its social, political and economic milieu," and that since age alone is no longer the defining feature, the concept of generation that locates young people within specific economic, cultural, social and political conditions offers a way beyond seeing generations as a series of birth cohorts (Wyn and Woodman 2006: 499).

Wyn and Woodman's suggestion has provoked critique and conversation just as Arnett's proposal of emerging adulthood did. France and Roberts (2015: 218) point out that the central starting point in Wyn and Woodman's work, a critique toward the transition perspective, seems to "misrepresent not only transitional studies but youth studies in general." According to France and Roberts (2015: 218-219), Wyn's and Woodman's view fails to capture the diversity of youth studies work since they see transitional studies as strongly correlated with psychological models of development, and believe these models have limited relevance for understanding what it means to be young in contemporary times.

Wyn and Woodman reflect specifically the Australian cultural and social context where the discussion on youth transitions focuses mostly on 'from school to work' transitions, and the discussion that has followed their suggestion concentrates very much on Europe and Australia. As a Latin American studies scholar, I claim that the cultural context of countries such as Nicaragua changes the way we should apply and evaluate such conceptual suggestions as Wyn's and Woodman's. Even though, as Coe and Vandegrift (2015: 136-137) point out, the concept of generation based on the work of Ortega y Gasset

³⁶ Wyn and Woodman are researchers at the Melbourne Youth Research Centre in Australia. They have used and developed their concept in several later publications. See e.g. Wyn and Andres 2011, Wyn 2012, Woodman and Wyn 2011, Woodman 2013.

(1933) and Mannheim (1952) holds significant theoretical currency in Latin American youth studies, the results of this study show that transitions still hold in the lives of young Nicaraguans. Even though this study focuses on students, my approach to transitions is more holistic than a linear 'school to work' standpoint, and the significance of transitions is also evident in my material. I discuss this further in Chapter 8. Thus, I tend to agree with Roberts (2007: 263-269 and France and Roberts (2015: 218-219) that Wyn and Woodman somewhat misrepresent transitional studies.³⁷

The current discussion on generation and transitions also tends to focus on the already very Eurocentric sphere of youth studies. Mannheim's (1952) concept of generations, which Wyn and Woodman also build on, has been criticized for ignoring factors such as class and gender, raising age as the central conflicting factor in society. Kohli (1996: 1) has suggested that the roots of social dynamics in all spheres of life, not only in politics but also in the economy and the family, lie in generations. In the light of my material, I argue that at least in Nicaragua to base questions of social dynamics purely on generations would only be justifiable when discussing politics, and even this would be an overstatement. My material does not show a major conflict related to age or generation in general, neither in the survey nor in the interviews. Even though many students expressed concern about young people being manipulated by adults the critique was directed towards adults using political power, or politicians using the young for their personal benefit, not towards older people or generations in general. Thus, in the case of Nicaragua the conflict seems to be related more to the state, and how it creates opportunities for some while denying them to others. Even though the concept of sociological generations aims beyond birth cohorts, we are still dealing with age. In many ways, the participants of this study shared a common respect towards elderly people. As one of the survey respondents suggested: "We all have the right to form a part of our society whether we are young or not."³⁸

I agree with Wyn and Woodman in their attempt to move away from the idea of youth as a linear transition, and their notion of the importance of understanding adulthood as a historical artefact, since any approach should aim to illuminate social processes and take into account social context as well as both transitions and continuity in the life course. However, in the light of my own material, I suggest that transitions are not something we should completely move away from.

³⁷ Also, as France and Roberts (2015) point out, scholars have not been able to resolve many of the issues that were problematic in Mannheim's (1952) proposal, such as what creates a new generation, what are its drivers and how this relates to broader processes of social change.

³⁸ Original in Spanish: Todos tenemos derecho de formar parte de nuestro país sin importar si somos jóvenes o no.

As France and Roberts (2015: 216) point out, one of the positive effects of the new emergence of the social generation approach is the discussion it has created, since it has challenged the traditional focus on youth transitions or youth cultures as limited, and opened up opportunities for rethinking youth and social change, which is one of the focuses of this study as well. However, several questions remain, one of those being the age-old problem of how can generations be defined, the same question that rose from Mannheim's article.³⁹ I do believe that the idea of sociological generations provides an instrument to describe, classify and analyze groups that reflect shared experiences in multiple ways in certain circumstances. One of the most important notions of the generational approach is the idea that generations are not based on biology, but are instead formed by social factors. I also find that the generational approach helps us piece together two important elements of cultural change: time as important social variable and continuity. Vandegrift (2016: 232) notes that one of the strengths of what she calls "a social generations lens", is the ability to conceptualize youth lives without imposing preexisting ideas of how youth transitions should be. I agree with all of these notions. However, there are certain aspects of the conversation on the generational approach I do not completely agree with. One of the points sometimes underlined by those suggesting a generational approach seems to be that long-standing concepts such as social class or gender are no longer useful (e.g. Woodman 2009: 246, Woodman 2012: 1074-1090). Scholars have sought to address questions of gender and class in their application of the generations approach (e.g. Woodman 2015). I find this to be important, since as Furlong (2009: 1) points out, inequalities such as class and gender still exert a powerful influence on the lives of the young.

Another open question for me is the emphasis placed on global generations (e.g. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2009, Edmund and Turner 2005). Despite increased globalization, shrinking distances, and fast communications, nation states still form an important part of many people's identity. It seems to me that many of the new proposals mentioned above dismiss the fact that the increased interconnectedness of today's world sometimes fools us into thinking too globally, or possibly into focusing on the Global-North and ignoring the Global-South. However, nation states and nationalisms still form a central part of people's identity (Pakkasvirta and Saukkonen 2007: 14-42). I strongly agree with the need to widen the horizon of the existing frameworks, keeping in mind both the global sphere and the local realities, since my material shows that locality is an important source of social capital in

³⁹ For a more comprehensive discussion on the questions that have risen from Wyn and Woodman's work, see e.g. France and Roberts (2015), Roberts (2007) as well as Wyn and Woodman's (2007) reply to Roberts.

the lives of Nicaraguan students. However, I also propose that the generational approach and the transitions approach do not rule each other out. Since in most societies gender, class, generation and societal structures all affect the lives of young people and the choices they make, I argue that it is important to consider all of these variables.

As discussed in this chapter, scholars in the field of youth studies tackle fundamental questions about our social realities. Even though I agree that it is true that age is no longer a defining factor, or at least not the only defining factor, of youth, the period of life we call youth still in some ways relates to transitions. Transitions was also a theme that arose from my material during my fieldwork period. Thus, I concluded that to be able to analyze and present my material I needed an approach that allows me to discuss both transitions and change, as well as analyze the social realities and resources of the students I studied. I present the theoretical framework of this study in the forthcoming section.

4. *Constructed Realities in a Changing World: Global, Local, Change and Time*

*Tiempo, yo te odio. Aunque sin ti no existiera.
Y por tu pasar moriré aunque por tu pasar nací.*⁴⁰

Tiempo yo te odio, Ernesto Cardenal

The main objective of this study is to broaden the view of Nicaraguan youth in a changing society and to shed light on the experiences of the young themselves. Since this study is based on ethnographic material, the theoretical framework applied is firstly a tool to analyze and present the themes that arise from the material itself. To be able to address the research questions posed and present the experiences of the students who participated in this study I have chosen to analyze my material within the framework of the social and cultural construction of knowledge. Central to my approach are the concepts of 'social fields,' 'capital,' and 'habitus' as Bourdieu (1977, 1984) has used them, alongside of the idea of 'the life course,' originally developed by Elder (1974, 1994, 1998a, 1998b) and the metaphor of 'pathways' that highlights the importance of both structure and agency. In this chapter I present the theoretical framework used in this study. Research on youth and society is related to time, to continuity and change, and to global and local realities. Thus, I begin by discussing the idea of 'global youth' and the difficulties that lie beneath the concept, and discuss the interdisciplinary approach of this study. First, I present the concepts of 'the life course,' 'transitions,' and 'pathways' and move on to discuss further questions on social fields, capital and habitus.

Global Youth and Hybrid Identities

I have always been intrigued by the way each individual experiences the society they live in, and how time, place and the changes that take around us can shape our views of the world. The core of my interest has always been rooted in the continuous change of the societies we live in, the social realities

⁴⁰ Time I hate you. Even though without you I would not exist. And by your passing I shall die even though by your passing I was born.

that surround us, the historical processes that transform our realities during time, and how we experience this change.

With this study I wish to shed light on the complex processes and realities that students face in their everyday lives, and in order to discuss the central themes in the field of youth studies in the Nicaraguan and Latin American context I needed a holistic interdisciplinary approach.⁴¹ To be able to understand the social systems, beliefs and experiences of the students as well as to contextualize them in the Latin American context and within the conceptions of youth presented in the previous chapters, requires a broader window than that of a single discipline. At this point it is important to distinguish interdisciplinarity from multidisciplinary. Multidisciplinary juxtaposes and adds together insights from two or more disciplines, but does not integrate these insights before the final synthesis. Pärssinen (2002: 109-110) shows, that multidisciplinary research can produce very interesting results. He also underlines that since the methods used in different disciplines cannot always observe particular processes, due to the difference in the timescales of the phenomena studied, for a study to be genuinely multidisciplinary, the data gathered within different disciplines should be analyzed separately, and researchers should also analyze the comparability of data from different disciplines. Interdisciplinary approach draws together and integrates the insights of two or more disciplines to study a complex issue or question (Repko et al. 2014: 23-29). One of the driving forces behind interdisciplinary research is the inherent complexity of nature and society. This kind of research concerns complex real world problems that involve natural systems or human society affected by many influences (Repko 2012: 33-35).

The decision to use the theoretical frameworks presented here arose from both the data itself and the experiences and social situations I encountered when conducting this research in Nicaragua. Before discussing this further, I find it important to stress that the complexities youth studies scholars are currently pondering are not new in many parts of the globe. The real lives of most young people around the globe have never followed the patterns presented in many of the studies about young people. Brown and Larson (2002: 1), however, have set an example I find to be very pertinent: they compare our understanding of the movement from childhood to adulthood in the 21st century to the forerunner of a

⁴¹ I am aware of the discussion on the two conceptions of interdisciplinary studies: generalist interdisciplinarians and integrationist interdisciplinarians. However, I feel that going deeper into this discussion is not in the interest of this study. For more insight into the process and theory of interdisciplinary research, see Repko 2012.

modern kinescope that used to entertain Victorian parlors. We tend to spin together the related yet distinctive features of the lives of the young around the globe, just like a strip of paper containing different images was inserted into the drum of a kaleidoscope to be spun around to create a single moving picture.

The danger that lies here is that when we focus on ideas such as a 'global youth culture' in which young people from across the globe dress similarly, listen to the same music and even style their hair similarly (Schlegel 2000: 71), 'global generations' in search of Nike trainers (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2009: 26), and the 'shrinking' of the world due to modern technologies, we very often forget the fact that, as Brown and Larson put it (2002: 2), a disproportionate number of our ideas of youth are based on the American or European teenager and that the vast majority of young people around the globe live in non-Western societies.⁴²

Even though globalization, access to the Internet and migration has brought young people from different sides of the globe into closer contact with their peers from different cultures, several of the central discussions in the field of youth studies, for example discussions on youth employment or unemployment, may be highly irrelevant in societies where much work is related to basic subsistence (Furlong 2013: 228). In fact, the differences between the lives of young people living in the Global North and the Global South are so profound that many of the theories used when studying youth, such as the implicit concept of adulthood as total independence from family origin, are meaningless or at least problematic in non-Western cultures (Nilan 2011: 22). Thus, as stated in the introduction of this study, one of the biggest challenges for youth studies today is how to approach the complexities of studying and understanding the lives of young people living in a world that is interconnected but at the same time highly fragmented.

Nilan and Feixa (2006:1-13) discuss 'hybridity', a cultural creativity or the making of something new. They define hybridity, following Bhabha (1995) as the social articulation of difference from the minority perspective. Nilan and Feixa describe the ways in which youth cultures adapt to local contexts, finding ways to assimilate aspects of global cultural identities or aspects of global cultural trends to a local cultural world. I find this to be a more plausible approach to the globalization of youth cultures

⁴² Approximately 85% of the 15-24-year-old population of the world live in developing or low-income countries (UN World Population Prospects 2017).

than for example the concept of global generations. One of my central concerns in this study is to maintain a sensitivity towards the global and local aspects of the experiences of the students that participated in this study. Even though I use some categorizations in this study, specifically when discussing the pathways that the students have chosen in a situation of uncertainty in Chapter 8, my aim is not to create a taxonomy of social realities applicable to all Nicaraguan students but to try to understand why the students studied have made the decisions they have made and how they themselves experience the world they live in.

The Life Course: Theoretical Accounts and Changing Contexts

The notion of the life course, developed from the work of Glen Elder (1974, 1994, 1998a, 1998b), has been central in the field of youth studies. Hunt (2005: 13-15) notes that Elder's concept of the life course should be clearly separated from the concept of a 'life cycle,' which is often related to an idea of 'traditional' societies and their structure and rites of passages. Such 'life cycles' were represented as being closely linked to sociological changes, which were in turn seen as related to biological changes. For Elder (1998a) an individual's experiences are linked to the lives of others and operate within a dynamic context of human agency that takes into consideration the timing of lives as well as historical time and place. In his own words; "The life course is age-graded through institutions and social structures, and it is embedded in relationships that constrain and support behavior – both the individual life course and a person's developmental trajectory are interconnected with the lives and development of others" (Elder 1998b: 951-952).

Heinz (2009: 3-13) has elaborated the life course theory further, suggesting that it rests on the following principles: each life phase affects the entire life course that is embedded in historical events and in time and place; human agency is central since individuals actively construct their biographies, and social circumstances influence transitions while social relationships and networks contribute to the shaping of biographies. Transitions are central to the idea of the life course and Elder's central principles have continued to underpin research relating to transitions from youth to adulthood. However, as Furlong (2013: 7) points out, in research the emphasis on transitions has shifted from one factor to another during different periods of time. During the 1960s the idea of clear routes leading to occupational 'niches' was prevalent while later, postmodern ideas of 'navigation' gave greater prominence to individual agency. Today, many researchers emphasize reflexive life management and biographical approaches,⁴³ where a person's life is presented as a project with uncertain outcomes that are constantly revised by the individuals concerned. In this context, youth as well as adulthood, is a status that must be negotiated with no clear definitions as to the stages on the life course (Furlong 2013: 9-10).

The life course perspective and transitional approaches have faced criticism as discussed in the previous chapter. I am aware of this critique and believe that the conversation is welcome and necessary.

⁴³ For more information on choice biographies, see e.g. Du Bois-Reymond 1998; Woodman 2009.

However, I find the idea of the life course useful for the purposes of this study. As Heinz (2009: 3) points out: “For youth research, the concepts ‘transitions’ and ‘pathways’ are of special importance because they refer to the timing and duration of the passage to adulthood and stimulate investigations on how life chances, institutional regulations and individual decisions are related.” I believe that the idea of transitions when examining young people can be a double-edged sword. If used blindly and without reflexivity it can lead us to think that all passages to adulthood are similar, or ignore the fact that what we call youth or adulthood is not in fact an easy concept to define. However, if ignored completely we forget the fact that transitions, and sometimes very concrete transition rites, to adult status remain important and meaningful in many societies and cultures, as I shall show is the case with the students that participated in this study.

In this study, I do not regard transitions as linear. Rather, I see them as Heinz (2009: 4) has outlined, as complex interactions between individual decisions, social pathways that have specific institutionalized guidelines and regulations, and opportunity structures. In the light of my data, the metaphor of pathways, often used specifically when discussing transitions from education to work, has also proven to be useful, since in the case of Nicaragua the idea of opportunity structures and the ability of an individual to make decisions regarding the routes the person wishes to take turned out to be one of the central themes in the interviews I conducted with the students. However, I wish to make clear that I use the concept strictly as a metaphor when discussing the decisions of the students. As Raffe (2003: 3) points out, academic commentators have criticized the concept of pathways for ignoring complexity and for assuming that all transitions are in the same direction, as well as for its focus on transitions from education into the labor market.

The transitional approach has also faced criticism for being too individualistic in the way that it ignores social structures and inequality. Raffe (2003: 3-19) discusses the use of the concept specifically in the context of education-work transitions, but I believe this critique is also useful to keep in mind in the case of this study. He points out, furthermore, that the concept can be useful as an organizing concept in current debates as long as it is kept in mind that the notion of pathways is a metaphor; a means of conveying meaning, not a theory or a rigorous analytical tool. He also underlines that the criticism mentioned before refers to implicit assumptions that we may make if we use the concept of pathways in an unreflecting way (Raffe 2003: 4). Thus, I have kept this in mind in my analysis. Pathways in this

study is used as a metaphor to highlight the choices students make in their life course within the opportunity structures they face and the capital available to them in their social realities.

Constructing Social Realities

The routes that students take, the situations they encounter, and the choices they have the ability to make do not exist on their own. Each experience and decision is tied to the social realities of the students, and each opportunity is somewhat structured by the society they live in and the resources they have available to them. As a scholar with a background in the interdisciplinary field of Latin American studies, which can be seen as both area studies and cultural studies (Mikkeli and Pakkasvirta 2007: 109), I approach the questions presented in this study within the context of Nicaraguan society, as well as within the historical processes of Latin America in general. Hence, the cultural and social context is essential to this study when trying to understand and explain the ways in which students construct their realities and their perception of the world they live in.

Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the sociological construction of reality connects structure and agency.⁴⁴ For Bourdieu (1984), the social relations of power within different positions structure social relations among actors. In turn, the social relations of the actors contribute to the structuring. According to Bourdieu, social situations he calls social fields possess their own principles, practices, and forms of using power. Individuals are situated within each field according to its own internal logic.⁴⁵ Social world holds various fields, and each of these fields is a relational space of its own, dedicated to a specific type of activity and regulated by specific rules. A field is also a place of competition and conflict, a space of play where actors struggle to achieve their goals within a network of objective relations between positions. In Bourdieu's words, "even in the universe par excellence of rules and regulations, playing with the rule is part and parcel of the rule of the game" (1990: 89).⁴⁶

When Bourdieu was developing his theory, the concept of fields was already in use in other disciplines such as psychology, physics, and mathematics. Hilgers and Mangez (2015: 1-36) point out in their analysis of Bourdieu's work, that Bourdieu's theory of social fields was constructed in a relatively autonomous fashion, but it does share the epistemology of field theories used in other disciplines,

⁴⁴ Bourdieu developed his theory in numerous works. See e.g. Bourdieu 1977, 1984, 1986b, 1998.

⁴⁵ The concept of social fields has been used in youth studies, for example when studying transitions from education to work. See e.g. Wyn 2017. France, Roberts and Wood (2018) have used Bourdieu's theories as tools to analyse social class and how privilege operates through institutional and intergenerational processes.

⁴⁶ Translation from French to English mine. Original in French: [C'est cette ambiguïté fondamentale de l'ordre bureaucratique que porte au grand jour la grève du zèle en montrant que il suffit de d'obéir à la lettre au règle qui régissent pour bloquer tout le fonctionnement d'un système qui repose officiellement sur l'obéissance à la règle: elle révèle que] même au sein de l'univers par excellence de la règle et du règlement, le jeu avec la règle fait partie de la règle du jeu.

namely that the social world is a relational space. They also note that in Bourdieu's work the notion of social fields serves not only to imply a relational form of epistemology, but also to designate distinct sub-spaces within the global space. For Bourdieu (1984, 1996b), fields are marked by struggles that constantly modify their internal power, the question of change within the fields also being crucial. One of the key concepts for understanding the structure of a specific field is the field of power. The field of power is not linked to a specific activity, but is instead "the space of relations of force between agents or between institutions having in common possessions of the capital necessary to occupy dominant positions in different fields" (Bourdieu 1996b: 215). For Bourdieu, the field of power is structured by the oppositions between dominating economic capital and dominated cultural and social capital, and every specific field is likely to be affected by the field of power (Bourdieu 1984).

A field is a structure of relative positions. Bourdieu argues that the resources available, capital and its compositions, determine the place of the social agent within the social system. Capital for Bourdieu is a social relation; it is energy that only exists and produces its effects in the field in which it is produced and reproduced. Each field has specific laws that determine the value and efficacy of the properties attached to persons in the field. The main forms of resources found in the social fields are economic, cultural and social capital. Economic capital refers to property and financial assets, cultural capital to knowledge, skills and qualifications. Social capital exists in the social networks essential to everyday life. Cultural capital may be accumulated either through the person's social background or through education (Bourdieu 1984: 113-114). Bourdieu has stated that cultural capital has three forms. Firstly, as an embodied state as an understanding the meaning of cultural goods, such as music, works of art, scientific formulae, etc. Secondly, an objectified state, meaning objects that require specific cultural abilities to be used, such as books, works of art, scientific instruments, etc. Thirdly, cultural capital exists in an institutionalized form as educational or professional qualifications (Bourdieu 1986).

Social capital is a widely used concept in the social and economic sciences. The concept is also popular in the field of youth studies. Hence, it is worth defining more specifically how it is used in this study. In the field of youth studies, James Coleman (1988), a youth education scholar from the United States, made the concept of social capital prominent in the 1980s. Coleman's original ideas were that social capital has a positive influence on wellbeing and it develops in groups. He also used the idea of bridging, meaning that one or more individuals belong to two or more overlapping groups, where social capital is produced. Coleman also maintained that social capital had only a positive influence (Bassani

2009: 75). Even though social capital is considered a key determinant of youths' well-being, the theory, often referred to as SCT, and literature on it, remains fragmented in the field and relies mostly on Coleman's limited conceptualization.⁴⁷ Put briefly, some scholars apply the concept of social capital in their work without using SCT, some use Bourdieu's theory, and some do not use either of them. One of the fundamental issues seems to be the lack of a distinction in the literature between 'the concept of social capital' and 'the theory of social capital' (Bassani 2009: 75). It is not necessary for this study to discuss SCT or its development any deeper, but it is important to clarify that the concept of social capital used in this study follows that of Bourdieu.

The position of each particular agent in the field is determined by interaction between the specific rules of the field, the agent's capital, and habitus. The concept of 'habitus' first emerges in Bourdieu's work *Distinction* (1984). Habitus is defined as a structuring structure that organizes practices and the perceptions of practices, and a structured structure (Bourdieu 1984: 170-171). Habitus comprises a set of internalized possibilities and dispositions that enable people to orientate themselves in social situations. Habitus is created in the interplay of free will and structure over time, and enables the establishment of intelligible relationships between a situation and practices, and importantly, it conditions our perceptions of these practices. In this sense habitus is reproduced unconsciously, without conscious concentration, and learning the principles of social fields is a non-conscious activity. Hence, habitus is a product of history and a sense of one's place and role in one's social reality.

Several scholars have analyzed Bourdieu's concept of habitus. Painter (2000: 242) describes habitus as: "the mediating link between objective social structures and individual action and refers to the embodiment in individual actors of systems of social norms, understanding patterns of behaviors, which, while not wholly determining action [...] do ensure that individuals are more disposed to act in some ways than others." For Bourdieu (1984), an actor's present behavior is defined by his or her practical relationship with the future, which consists of the relationship between the opportunities offered and the habitus. Thus, habitus is also a social place and a product of history, and as such a useful concept for understanding and explaining social interactions.

Bourdieu's theory has also faced criticism. Scholars have pointed out specific themes and problems in his theory, as well as developed it further through a critical lens. Bourdieu has been criticized for

⁴⁷ For further information on the dimensions of social capital theory, see Bassani 2007.

viewing all action as interest-oriented and based on economic capital (e.g. Smith and Kulynych 2002), for under developing agency (e.g. McNay 2004), and for lacking analysis on gender and ethnicity (e.g. Adkins and Skeggs 2004). Scholars have also pointed out specific problems, for example Bourdieu's division of habitus into two elements, primary and general (see e.g. Kauppi 2000, Kivinen 2006, Roos and Rotkirch 2003).⁴⁸

I am aware of this criticism, and use Bourdieu's concepts to analyze and introduce certain themes that arose from my data and fieldwork experiences. Bourdieu's concepts of economic, cultural and social capital and habitus afford an approach to the beliefs and acts of the group studied, and thus complement my aim to discuss the decisions and experiences of the interviewees, due to the relative absence of economic capital in some of the students' lives. Furthermore, as Purhonen et al. (2006: 16-18) point out, it is important to note that Bourdieu created his concepts in interaction with empirics. One of the special characteristics of Bourdieu's work is that the base and background of his central concepts – field, habitus, and capital – are clearly found in his practical general theory, but their primary function is to be used as a conceptual toolbox in the analysis of concrete empirical phenomenon. My study places emphasis on the historical processes that form social situations and the experiences of change as well as social interactions. Since Bourdieu's approach is concerned with the question of what motivates human action, I find it to be a fruitful tool in my analysis.

⁴⁸ For dialogue on Bourdieu and philosophers in the English-speaking world, see e.g. Shusterman 1999.

Space, Place and Time: On Temporality

When discussing youth we are also discussing time. Since youth as a category is often temporarily defined as a transitional period, time and the passing of time is something that cannot be ignored. Time, the use of time and the expectations of when something should happen and how long something should take in the lives of the young are often imposed on young people by society. How we see the world also changes over time. The constant flux of the world around us influences the way we see and interpret our place in it. As Fredriksen and Dalsgård (2014: 1-22) point out, time is materialized and social; it can be seen as a constitutive dimension of social life. Our sense of time is linked to an internal and external motion of social life that is inherently active (Dalsgård 2014: 98). This can also be seen in the interviews I conducted for this study. When biological age and social status, in other words what society holds as a norm at a certain age, differ, time becomes troublesome.

Time is also tied to opportunities, such as the lack of opportunities, or waiting for them to arrive. The resources available and what is seen as a valuable resource differ according to time and place. Bourdieu (1977) discusses *tempo*, the timing of interactions. *Tempo* concerns the significance of the timing of the practical decisions and actions of the participants, and how time allows room for strategy even in the most ritualistic actions (such as gift giving). In his own words, “time derives its efficacy from the state of the structure of relations within which it comes to play [...] there is still room for strategies which consist of playing on the time, or rather the *tempo*, of the action” (Bourdieu 1977: 7). Thus, capital and the rules of a field are not the only things that determine one’s position. The *tempo*, the strategy and timing of one’s the interactions and decisions, are also important.⁴⁹

In today’s societies, time is also tied to the constant rapid flow of information in the virtual world. Even though in this study I mainly discuss the forms of capital presented by Bourdieu I find it important to mention the concept of virtual capital, or the production of social capital in the virtual world. It should be kept in mind that virtual capital is still a quite ill-defined term. It can be used to refer to capital, and even currency in the virtual or synthetic worlds (e.g. Malaby 2006), to social capital production in a virtual community (e.g. Mathwick et al. 2007), or to transmitting social and cultural capital through the social media (e.g. McEvan and Sobre-Denton 2011). In the context of my study the question of

⁴⁹ The passing of time, waiting, and the relation between time and modernity has also been discussed by youth studies scholars, see e.g. Jeffrey 2010.

transmitting and creating social and cultural capital in the social media are interesting themes. Since this study did not deal directly with questions related to social media, I cannot make theoretical proposals based on my results. However, I wish to point out that the questions of virtual capital, access to internet and social media networking are interesting and important themes worldwide, and should also be investigated in more detail in Nicaragua. I will return to this suggestion in my conclusions.

Another aspect of time that must be considered is the temporality of the research at hand. In the case of this study, as is the case with most studies that focus on change and society, the information provided is passed by time if not already during the research process but at least by the time the research is published. Hence, some of the students interviewed in this research have moved forward, some may have changed their opinions of the themes discussed, and since I conducted my research Nicaraguan society has also changed. My aim in the analysis has been to be clear about when the material was collected. Hence, when analyzing the interviews and field notes I have tried to keep in mind the time span of the research. Even though I mention and comment on some events in Nicaraguan society that took place after the interviews were conducted, I have tried to make a clear distinction about what parts of my analysis are based on the interviews conducted during specific times and which comments are my reflections on my field notes from my later visits to Nicaragua. In the next chapter I present my data and the methods used in this study in more detail.

III Research Methods

5. *Collecting and Analyzing Ethnographic Data*

*En este aposento
que soy yo
mi realidad
(la cotidiana)
... realidad
(la cotidiana)
es un jadeo apenas
que se extingue.⁵⁰*

Claribel Alegría

Ethnography and the Socially Constructed World

In ethnographic research, researchers constantly compare and analyze what they see and observe with the aim of making the lives, experiences and thoughts of the particular group studied intelligible to the reader. The nature of research also includes comparison in the light of one's own experiences and ideas (Gay y Blasco and Wardle 2007: 3-5). In this study, I aim to create a dialogue between the social and the subjective. Since ethnography as a method is inductive, holistic and multifactorial, I felt it to be the best method to approach the subject of this research. I also wanted to be able to emphasize the social interactions that occurred within the groups of students and their communities, and ethnographic research provides the tools to do this. As Angrosino (2007: 15) notes:

Ethnography deals with people in the collective sense. It studies the people in organized groups; communities or societies and examines the distinctive way of life of such group,

⁵⁰ In this room that is me my reality (the quotidian) ... reality (the quotidian) is barely a gasp that dies out.

its culture, through the examination of shared behaviors, customs and beliefs. Participant observation places the researcher in the midst of the community studied, in direct contact with the people whom participate in the research. The dialogic nature of ethnographic method also places the conclusions and interpretations of the researcher under scrutiny of those studied in the research even as the interpretations and conclusions are only being formed.

Hence, the analysis of the data collected and the process of collecting it are already constructions of the socially constructed world. The results presented in this study have traveled through the lens of the researcher, in this case myself, and are as such a co-construction of my interpretations, the voices of the participants and the social interactions I had with them. During the data gathering in 2012 I spent most of the weekdays at the universities with the students. In some cases, I was allowed to observe classes and lectures, and part of the days I spent time in the cafeterias and public areas of the universities, where I also discussed with several students who did not directly take part in this study. In my previous visits in 2010 and 2011 I also lived in the homes of local students. During the time I spent in the field in Nicaragua I also took part in several leisure time activities. Some of them took place on the campuses, some of them in the family home of the students. I also participated in everyday tasks such as applying for an ID card, going to church, buying groceries, visiting grandparents, nights out with friends, football games, and different types of social gatherings with many of the students who participated in this study. I also took part in cultural events and social gatherings in the local communities. I kept field notes of the discussions that took place and my observations, I collected newspaper articles, and listened to the local radio. Later when I returned to Finland, I followed the local Nicaraguan news, radio and social media groups online on a daily basis.

Some of the activities I participated in turned into surprising situations, such as an invitation to paint graffiti in a deserted lot in Managua, an event interrupted by the local police. As Geertz (1973: 412-437) describes in his classic anthropological essay "Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," a researcher conducting ethnographic study may end up in unforeseen situations that can sometimes help create confidence between the researcher and the informants. In my case, participating in leisure time activities was crucial in gaining the confidence of the students. Hence, the ethnographic method gave me access to information I most likely would have not been able to gather had I solely conducted interviews. The experiences I describe throughout this study are all based on my field notes.

Since ethnographic research requires the researcher to be in somewhat constant interaction with the people studied, considerations of ethics are important. Doucet and Mauthner (2002: 122-129) suggest that one way of building an ethical research relationship with both readers and users of the research, is to be transparent on the epistemological, ontological, theoretical and personal assumptions that inform the research and to pay special emphasis to these in the analysis. In the previous chapters I sought to give a clear view of the background of this study, as well as my aims and my personal value standpoint. I have also aimed to remain reflexive and transparent during the data analysis process, as well as when presenting my results. When informing the participants of this research I followed the checklist presented by Kuula (2011: 102). All the participants were informed of the objectives of this study and they had a chance to ask questions about my background, my personal interest in the subject studied and the way the material of this study would be used. The material is only used in this study, and the anonymity of the participants is respected. Ethnographic studies often use pseudonyms. Due to the political situation of the country I chose to use numeric codes to eliminate speculations about who has participated. I also chose to use numeric codes to clarify which respondent I am citing.

When discussing my analysis of the ethnographic data it should be kept in mind that there is no single strategy for the analysis (e.g. Gibbs 2007). In ethnographic research, data analysis is not something that only begins once the data collection is complete (Davies 2008: 231). Thus, my analysis was in a way ongoing in the form of field notes along with my previous experiences of Nicaraguan society when I began the steps described here. My first step was to organize the data in categories that could be described, following Davies (2008: 234), as low-level theoretical concepts for classifying the data, drawn from my research questions and observations during my fieldwork. My aim was to maintain a critical reflexive perspective on the theoretical concepts that guided the development of these early concepts. In the case of my study, the early working concepts were generation, gender, youth and generational experiences, but as already mentioned, during my research I moved toward a broader framework.

As Angrosino (2007: 68) points out, researchers conducting ethnographic research in the field should remember that they are not in control of all the elements in the research process. The attempt is to capture life as it is being lived, and hence “we must be aware that things that might appear meaningful to us as outsiders might or might not be equally meaningful to the people who live in the community being studied.” I am sure that if a Nicaraguan university student wrote this study, there would be differences in the interpretations made. The experiences of the people interviewed are always far more

complex than can be written here. However, my aim is to discuss the topics that arose from my material as truthfully and as transparently as possible. In the following section I describe the research settings of this study.

The Research Setting: Conducting Research among Nicaraguan University Students

Adult youth researchers constantly face a research setting that is something that they themselves used to be, namely young. Thus, when carrying out such research, it is intriguing to reflect on our own memories. In my case, Nicaragua is a familiar country to me since my childhood. This helped me in my research, but it also forced me to constantly reflect on how I interpret my material in order to keep clear what parts of my interpretations might have been affected by my own memories. Having conducted fieldwork in the country for my master's thesis I was quite familiar with the schedule of the students and the universities. But despite this, conducting interviews and surveys for a doctoral dissertation involved challenges. Most of the universities were not interested in helping me with my project, and it proved to be difficult to even get onto the campuses of some of the private universities, especially Universidad Centro Americana (UCA). Due to security issues, all the universities have armed guards at their entrances. I could come and go without any problems on the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua (UNAN) and Universidad Agraria (UNA) campuses, since some of the deans of the universities had offered me their support. I got onto the UCA campus once, and on other occasions I waited outside the campus entrance to talk to the students. In all the private universities, mainly UCA, Universidad Politécnica de Nicaragua (UPOLI) and Universidad de Ingeniería (UNI), some of the students took an interest in my study, and introduced me to their fellow students, which gave me access to the campuses.

The two focus group discussions at UNAN Managua were organized in very different ways. The first of the group interviews was made during a leisure time activity for medical students that was organized at the university campus. I had been invited by a student who had already participated in an interview with me and wanted me to have a chance to get to know some of her classmates. When I arrived, I was greeted by a student's representative. I told him I would like to conduct a focus group discussion with some of the students. He promised to assist me with the matter right after he first resolved a more pressing issue: one of the performers at the event had canceled at the last minute, and 200 students were sitting and waiting. I was accompanied by a friend of mine, who mentioned I was a professional dancer. Before I knew it, I found myself onstage in front of a crowd of students, doing an improvised salsa show. First I felt worried how the students would respond, and was concerned whether my credibility as a researcher would be compromised. Could I conduct the interviews as I had planned and was my conduct even ethical?

In fact, it turned out well. Many of the students discussed with me in an easier manner after having seen me dance, and the event created several new contacts, who later invited me to take part in other activities and allowed me to observe their everyday lives. When later thinking about the ethics of the matter, I realized that it was important to keep clear which of the students knew of my profession, since later in the interview process some of the students brought up questions related to musical genres such as reggaeton, one of my main fields as a professional dancer. The students who discussed the theme with me, and are cited in this study, did not know of my profession. Situations such as these were certainly not the first ones that came to my mind when I prepared for fieldwork, yet the events and interactions the researcher faces in the field often come as a surprise and provide valuable information.

As an ethnographer who studies young people it is quite easy to make connections with one's own experiences of youth. I aimed to avoid this since, as Biklen (2004: 715-730) points out, narrations linked to the researcher's own youth and memories of it often authenticate the author's speaking positions and this may lead to ignoring power relations between adults and the young. Since one of my goals is to give voice to the students' experiences I have aimed to use their own words as often as I can and cite what they told me. The next sections present the population of the study, my research methods and my timetable.

6. Fieldwork and Data Collection

*El que tiene más galillo siempre traga más pinol.*⁵¹

Popular Nicaraguan Frase

Population of the Study

This study is based on ethnographic material collected in Nicaragua during several periods of fieldwork from 2008 to 2016. The first interview data was collected in 2009 for my master's thesis (Pääkkönen 2011a); it is used in this study as secondary material mainly when I refer to the results of the thesis. The interviews analyzed in this study were conducted in 2012. The specific group investigated in this study are Nicaraguan university students born between 1980-1997 who were studying at the time of the data collection.

The intention of this study is not to provide a picture of all Nicaraguan youth, but rather to concentrate specifically on the experiences of university-level students. Interruptions in studies are common due to changes in family situations as well as for economic reasons, and for this reason the age range of the participants is quite broad. The research participants represented all departments of the country, and there were participants from both public and private universities.⁵² In total I conducted 305 survey interviews, 17 individual in-depth interviews and two focus group discussions, one with five and one with 12 participants. Specific details of the survey participants are presented in Table 1. Details of the in-depth interview and focus group participants are presented in Table 2. Specific information of the province and university of the participants are mentioned in the analysis where relevant for the topic discussed. A table of the interview participants is found in Appendix 2.

⁵¹ A Nicaraguan saying that translates as: "The one who has a big uvula always swallows more pinol," meaning that people who speak most convincingly usually get what they want.

⁵² UNAN and UNA are public universities, the rest are private with UPOLI, UCA and UNI the biggest in the private sector.

The number of survey responses corresponds quite accurately with the population of each province and the size of the universities, with Managua being the most populated province in Nicaragua, and UNAN being the largest university in the country. To create a specific context for the survey interviews it would have been ideal to have had specific data on the number of university-level students in Nicaragua. Unfortunately, since the university network of the country is extremely fragmented, many private universities do not follow any specific requirements, and dropping out and returning to studies is very common, it is impossible to have a completely reliable set of data. The biggest universities in the country belong to the Consejo Nacional de Universidades (CNU), a governing organization of higher education. CNU estimates that the 10 universities that belong to the organization have approximately 114,000 students. How this is estimated or any other information is not available (CNU 2017).

Research Methods

My fieldwork methods included a survey questionnaire, in-depth interviews, group discussions, participant observation and field journals. The data are, to date, the most comprehensive material collected on Nicaraguan university-level students. The survey and all the interviews and discussions were conducted in Spanish. Due to my background, I am fluent in Nicaraguan slang and dialect and therefore I had no trouble discussing with the students. As mentioned before, I chose to use several different fieldwork techniques to gain a deeper understanding of the students' experiences. The methods are not considered in a hierarchical manner, as one supplementing the other; they are instead seen as complementary.

Empirical materials were collected through individual and focus group discussions and a survey interview in Nicaragua's three leading university cities: Managua, León and Estelí. The autonomous RAAN and RAAS regions have two universities, Universidad de las Regiones Autónomas de la Costa Caribe Nicaragüense (URACCAN) and Bluefields Indian and Caribbean University (BICU). Despite my attempts to contact the universities to gain permission to conduct interviews on their campus, I received no word from them. However, there were 5 participants who were from the RAAN and RAAS area, but had moved to other areas of the country to study. Yet, conducting further research specifically in the Atlantic coast area would have been extremely interesting. The data were collected in Nicaragua from May 2012 to August 2012. During the entire data gathering, I paid attention not only to what was said, but also how the participants said what they said: emotions, expressions, tones of voice and other nonverbal communication were recorded in my field notes. I kept a field journal in which I recorded my observations on every visit I made to Nicaragua from 2008 to 2016. The fieldwork timetable is presented in Table 3

Survey questionnaire

The gathering of the responses for the survey questionnaire was started in May 2012 from Finland. My Nicaraguan friends took the survey forms to UNAN and UCA campuses where they could be returned anonymously to a box. From there I received the sealed interviews or directly from my friends at the campus, who passed on the forms to me when I arrived in June 2012 to continue the survey. I delivered the rest of the surveys myself and they were returned directly to me. At the UNAN, UNI, UPOLI and UCA campuses I had direct contact with the students who participated; at the UNA campus a faculty member assisted me in finding participants. In all cases participation was voluntary. The students

studying in other universities were found through students who had already participated. Many participants took an interest in the study and shared the information with their friends or brought their friends to meet me to take part in the survey.

In the survey questionnaire, the respondents were asked questions about Nicaraguan society and politics, the history of the country, their studies, the meaning of concepts such as feminism and gender equality, and situations in which they had encountered discrimination or exclusion, and the reasons they believed were behind this discrimination. The questions were derived from the observations of my previous fieldwork periods in Nicaragua in 2008-2011, the results of existing research, the questions that arose from the results of my master's thesis, my field notes from my previous visits to the country, and from the comments from online discussions my article about the political situation of Nicaraguan youth published in *Confidencial Digital* in 2011 provoked (Pääkkönen 2011b). The survey form is found in Appendix 1.

Table 1. Survey Participants: gender, year of birth, university, and province.

Survey: total number of participants 305.

Gender	%	Year of Birth %	University %
Female 48.7%		1992-1994 51.15%	UNAN 48.2%
Male 47.1%		1989-1991 29.84%	UNI 11.8%
Undefined 4.2%		1986-1988 6.89%	UCA 11.15%
		1995-1997 6.23%	UPOLI 9.84%
		1983-1985 2.6 %	UNA 9.18%
		1980-1982 1%	OTHERS 9.84%
		Undefined between 1980-1997 2.3%	
Province			
Number of survey answers per province.			
Managua 142		Rivas 6	Undefined 5
León 27		Carazo 6	
Estelí 25		Granada 5	
Chinandega 24		Matagalpa 4	
Masaya 18		Madriz 3	
Matagalpa 13		Río San Juan 3	
Jinotega 11		RAAS 3	
Nueva Segovia 7		RAAN 2	

Table 2. Individual Discussion and Focus Group Discussion Participants

Individual discussions: total number of participants 17.

Female	Male	Year of Birth
7	10	1986-1992

Focus group discussions

Group 1. University: UNAN Managua			Group 2. University: UNAN Managua		
Female	Male	Year of birth	Female	Male	Year of Birth
2	3	1989-1991	3	9	1986-1992

Table 3. Fieldwork Periods and Visits to Nicaragua 2008-2016 ⁵³

2008 May-June	Preliminary fieldwork for master's thesis
2009 June-August	Fieldwork for master's thesis: thematic interviews
2010 June –July	Fieldwork during the master's thesis writing process
2011 June	Visit and field work
2011 Dec – 2012 Jan	Preliminary fieldwork for dissertation data collection
2012 May-August	Dissertation data collection: survey and interviews
May – June 2012	Survey
July- August 2012	Interviews and focus group discussions
2013 July	Visit and field work during the dissertation writing process
2014 May	Visit and field work during the dissertation writing process
2014 Dec – 2015 Jan	Visit and field work during the dissertation writing process
2016 July	Visit and field work during the dissertation writing process

The students were given the choice to answer the survey anonymously, but were asked to leave their contact information in case they wished to participate either in the individual or the focus group

⁵³ As stated before in the introduction of this study, I have lived part of my childhood in Nicaragua in different periods during 1990-1994. I also keep in weekly contact with my local friends, follow the Nicaraguan news, and maintain close contact with the country.

discussions. Participants were advised that the results would be reported in an article as well as in my doctoral dissertation with exemplar quotes, and that no individuals would be named. All the participants gave permission to be quoted. When initially designing the questions for the survey, I followed the measurement model first introduced by Tarkkonen (1987), and as presented by Vehkalahti (2008: 20-23), mostly to clarify for myself the specific themes I wished to examine. The measurement model is mainly a tool for the researcher to use when structuring the phenomenon at hand. I used it to define the dimensions behind the phenomenon studied and to derive the specific questions of the survey by outlining the phenomenon I wished to research, and then breaking it down into smaller parts that formed the actual questions. In designing the actual form of the questions of the survey I aimed to follow the advice of Fowler (1995: 78-102), specifically focusing on asking about first-hand experience, being aware of asking about causality or solutions to too complex problems, asking one question at a time and paying attention to the wording of the questions.

I began my survey data analysis by breaking the survey material down into its component parts, searching for patterns, themes and regularities. The survey data was entered into the Helsinki University's e-form program in 2012 in Nicaragua. E-form is an online service of the University of Helsinki, which allows basic cross tabulations and absolute and relative distribution of the answers, as well as online surveys. Even though my survey was not conducted online, I chose to enter the data into the e-form, since I wanted to keep the option open for online answers. Also, at the point of the survey data gathering, I was still considering the specific program I would use when further analyzing the data. Since e-forms allow exportation of the data in various forms (excel, spss, csv, xml), it was a convenient way to pre-organize the data. I did basic cross tabulations and groupings of the data using e-form, and used Excel program for more complex groupings and cross tabulations. After identifying the emerging themes, I began with a description of these themes and then moved on to identifying categories of themes. I looked for both consistencies and inconsistencies in the data and remained open to 'negative evidence,' meaning if a case arose that did not fit my emerging view I would consider whether it was a case of variation or whether it reflected my own lack of information. Throughout my analysis, I engaged in constant validity checks, looking at consistencies and inconsistencies, reflecting on what had been said against other available documents, such as newspaper accounts and reports by other researchers, and considering alternative explanations.

The in-depth interviews

As mentioned earlier, the participants in the survey questionnaire were asked to leave their contact information if they were interested in taking part in an in-depth interview. The students who took part in the in-depth interview were picked out of this group as a random sample. A few of the participants who had not left their contact information on the survey form contacted me later to participate in the in-depth interview. Thus, I was not able to match the survey questionnaire with the in-depth interview in the case of all the participants. The participants themselves decided the time and place of the interview. My main goal was to minimize the feeling of a formal study setting to allow the students to discuss freely the themes they themselves found important. The interviews were structured around four key themes:

1. **Self** (values, objectives, studies and past time activities, family, what is important to them, what being young means to them)
2. **Society** (their place in it, opportunities, peer groups and other social relations, the meaning of their studies in the society, how young people are seen in the society)
3. **Wishes and hopes for the future** (how they see their future, what their hopes and fears for the future are, what they want to change and how it could be done)
4. **Conceptions about the past and the present** (whether the concept of youth, generations, students or society has in their opinion changed, what the important events of the past are for them and why, how the events of the past have affected their present)

I carried out the interviews more as discussions than formal interviews and gave the participants the opportunity to ask questions about the nature of the research and my personal ties to Nicaragua. The interviews were recorded with a digital voice recorder, apart from one interview that was made using written notes since the digital recorder got wet in the rainy season weather and did not work when I arrived at the interviewee's house. Since in this interview I relied on my notes I wrote them up directly after the interview. The other interviews were carefully transcribed from the tapes. I paid attention to how things were expressed; whether the person interviewed took pauses to think, and took notes on non-verbal communication during the interview. When planning and conducting the in-depth interviews I followed the procedures recommended by Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2008) in their manual for semi-structured interviews.

Group discussions

The focus group discussions took place at the UNAN campus in Managua. The participants for the group discussion were found using two different methods: group A was formed from a student event and group B was formed with a dean of UNAN Managua's assistance. Group A participants also filled in a survey questionnaire. Group B did not take part in the survey questionnaire due to timing issues. Group A was a peer group of medical students. Group B was formed from UNEN student organization actives with the aid of one of the UNAN Managua. Some of the participants seemed to regard the situation as an obligatory appointment, which was reflected in their participation. I have taken this into account and discuss the theme further in my results. The objective of the group discussions was also to observe how the students interact when discussing the themes of the study. Discussions were recorded using a digital voice recorder, but I also made notes during the conversation. The key themes of the discussions were as presented above. However, the discussions followed a less structured route than the in-depth interviews, since I wanted to allow the students to lead the conversations instead of directing it myself. I began the analysis of the interviews reading through both my field notes and the transcribed interviews.

Participant observation

During the 2012 research period, I took part in several student events, spent time at the campuses, visited the homes of the students and attended lectures they went to. I also observed the students in various social situations, such as church, government institutions (applying for an ID card, etc.), peer group gatherings, birthdays, as well as their everyday tasks at home with their families. This enabled me to better consider different positions, classificatory systems and practices. I kept a field journal of my observations. I also compare the observations of the research period to the experiences I have previously had of Nicaraguan society and my visits to the country both before and after the data collection.

After transcribing the interviews and group discussions, I began reading through the transcripts and my field notes, listening to the interview tapes and searching for uniform themes. I also reflected and compared the discussions on the results of the survey analysis. I have aimed to present the data as clearly as possible. In my discussion, I explain the data behind each finding, clarifying which parts of the citations used in this study are from the in-depth interviews and group discussions and which citations are comments written on the survey forms. To protect the participants' identity, I refer to the in-depth interview participants solely by a letter code, gender and year of birth, and to the group discussion participants by a letter code, group number, and gender.

IV FINDINGS

7. Spaces and Places of the Young

*Qué ganas de hundirse
en el corazón tuyo
que no tienes
eso también es poesía
andar buscando
lugares que no existen.⁵⁴*

Blanca Castellón, Chapuzón

In this chapter I present the most typical social fields of the students that participated in this study and discuss the forms of capital and resources they have. I apply Bourdieu's (1984, 1996b) concept of social fields. For Bourdieu, a field is a structure of relative positions with specific laws, where the available resources determine the place of a social agent. The main resources found in the social fields are economic, cultural and social capital. Economic capital refers to property and financial assets; cultural capital refers to knowledge, skills and qualifications. Social capital exists in the social networks that are essential to everyday life. Cultural capital may be accumulated either through the person's social background or through education (Bourdieu 1984: 113-114). The notions presented here form a base for my analysis throughout my results chapters. In the first section of this chapter I present the social fields and summarize my notions of the resources available for the students. In the second section I discuss the themes that according to my material create most tension in Nicaraguan society: religion and politics, and the effect that the politicization of one of the biggest student unions in the country has had in the lives of the students. As we shall see, religion both unites and divides the students, and due to the political situation of the country the membership in the student union creates both social capital and tensions among the students.

⁵⁴ What desires to go under, in the heart you do not have, that too is poetry, to be looking for places that do not exist.

Presentation of the Identified Social Fields

The space that society allows young people to occupy tells a story of the society itself but also of the expectations the members of that society have of youth. By space I mean both the physical places that young people can use as well as a more abstract space, a space in society. Such a space also concerns a feeling of being able to express oneself, of being heard and having a chance to participate and a sense of one's place. The space that young people have in society has been discussed and studied from various perspectives. Civic engagement, political participation, employment, citizenship, and voting, among other things, have been of interest to youth studies scholars worldwide.⁵⁵ Education remains one of the pressing topics in the field, and as Furlong (2013: 48) among others has pointed out, experiences in schools and universities may shape much of the subsequent lives of the young. Even though I study specifically university students, my main interest is the students' experiences in a more comprehensive setting. Thus, my approach to the educational system is holistic; the educational system does not exist as a separate sphere as it is very much connected to the students' broader life contexts.

Over the years, I have had the opportunity to participate in many ways in the everyday life of Nicaraguans. When conducting this research, I spent a lot of time at the university campuses but I also met with students outside the university and took part in their everyday activities to be able to map out the spaces central in their lives, and to identify the social situations in which students operate in their daily life. When mapping out the social situations the students face, I applied the concept of social fields. For Bourdieu, fields are places of social play, where the resources available determine the position of a social agent (Bourdieu 1977, 1984). Thus, a field is also an arena of struggle and different strategies. Based on my material and my time in the field, the social fields I have identified include the university, student and/or youth organizations, peer groups and youth cultures, and family life. These are not the only social fields in the students' lives but they were the most typical fields that arose in my material. These fields are also interrelated, overlapping and in dynamic interaction. Based on my observations in Nicaragua, my field notes, and the interviews I conducted, the fields identified as the most typical in the students' lives are: the university, peer groups, youth organizations, and family life. This identification is based on where the students spent most of their time, on the themes they

⁵⁵ On youth civic engagement, see e.g. Youniss et al. 2002, Flanagan 2009, Sherrod et al. 2010; on employment, see e.g. Julkunen 2009, Mortimer 2009, Edwards et al. 2016; on political participation and citizenship, see e.g. Harris 2009, Cairns et al. 2016.

discussed with me, and what they expressed is important for them. There are of course other social fields in Nicaraguan society, but as far as this study was concerned my main goal was to identify the fields that arose as the most important spaces in the lives of the students.

As expected, the theme of the university as a space occurred most frequently in all the conversations. This was clearly partly due to my investigation dealing specifically with university students as a pre-identified group. The importance of the university as a social space is also understandable since for many young Nicaraguans the first time they experience more responsibility and freedom is at university. Most students concentrate only on their studies, and working part time alongside of studying is not as common as it is in some other countries. A considerable part of students' daily lives is spent at university and on campus. Many respondents were also at the beginning of their studies, whereas the importance of the university as a social field would probably be smaller if most of the participants were about to graduate, or were already partly in working life. An illustration of the social fields identified and their interconnections are found in Figure 1. Even though I focus specifically on university students I believe the social fields presented here somewhat reflect social relations in the wider Nicaraguan society as well. As Lahire (2015: 66) reminds us, a field is a microcosm in the macrocosm of the encompassing social space. Bourdieu (1984) has made a distinction between primary (generic) habitus; a set of dispositions acquired in early childhood, and a secondary (specific) habitus, or a multiplicity of (specific) habitus. The latter is any system of transposable patterns of thought or behavior that categorizes information and is mediated through the specific habitus in a specific field. Thus, following Bourdieu's theory, the social fields of university students and the power relations within these fields are in part reflections of the relations of society in general.

When discussing the space that young people have in a society we must consider the situations in which they interact with other members of that society as well as the resources available to them. As Facio et al. (2017: 450) conclude, political instability and the economic state of many of the Latin American countries present challenges for the young of the region.⁵⁶ This is also reflected in the lives of Nicaraguan students. Most of the students that participated in this research operate with very restricted economic resources. However, the relative absence of economic capital did not seem to be an issue to many of the students that participated in this study, rather it was a situation most of them were very

⁵⁶ Facio et al. present features of positive development among Latin American youth, which is a welcome and needed topic in my opinion; however, I do not agree with all their statements. I return to their findings in the following sections.

used to. In general, it seems that even though economic resources are important, in their everyday social interactions the students operate mainly within the spheres of other types of resources. The students use different field specific resources when operating in a specific field and within specific social situations; the form of capital that is recognized in each specific field.

According to my material, most of the students operate within fields that recognize mainly cultural and social capital. This is not a very surprising result, since in the beginning of this research I was already aware of the relative lack of economic capital in the lives of many of the students. In many studies, young people are typically seen gaining the benefits of social capital through the social capital of their parents. However, the existence of social capital in peer groups and virtual groups formed by young people is a distinctive feature of the experience of the young and is thus of major interest (Helve and Bynner 2007: 1-3). This is evident in my material as well. For most of the students the family forms the most important social unit, and while the social, and in some cases economic, capital acquired through one's parents plays a role in the lives of the students, the knowledge and skills learned at the university circle back into family life: at the university, the students operate mainly with cultural capital, skills, competences and qualifications. The skills and qualifications acquired at the university on the other hand are transferred into social capital in the sphere of family life, and in certain peer group activities. As we shall see in the following sections, peer groups are also places where social capital accumulates.

Studies and being a student create new social networks. The skills and qualifications acquired during studies are valued both as a means of improving one's economic status but are also seen as valuable social capital, a theme to which I return in Chapter 8. The students operate by the specific rules of each social situation and have different habituses. Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Nice 1990: 53) argues that habituses are:

systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to obtain them.

The field of university also forms a temporary community, a space that has its own rules and practices. Many of the students referred to themselves in terms such as 'we the students' and 'me being a student.'

This was also clearly demonstrated when the students spoke about their plans for the future or events occurring in society. Expressions such as 'fuera en la sociedad,' outside in the society, or simply 'fuera,' outside, were often used when addressing life outside the field of the university. Even though the university forms a temporary community it is not a conflict-free zone; everyone entering the university enters automatically into this field, but this does not necessarily unite students. As Vandeberghe (1999: 32-67) points out, since a field is a structure of relative positions defined by the volume of capital, the position of an actor or a group depends both on the way in which it manages to progress and renew itself as well as on how other actors in the field evolve or seek to evolve.

Since the habitus is constantly reproduced and redefined (Bourdieu 1984, Bourdieu and Nice 1990), the students adapt to the rules of different social situations cognitively. This is demonstrated especially when the fields I identified overlap: within the fields already mentioned I identified specific subfields. The subfields that arose from my material are the student organization Unión Nacional de Estudiantes de Nicaragua (UNEN), the political youth organization Juventud Sandinista, some faculty-specific student groups, and family activities that overlap with the social situations with peer groups, such as going to church. According to my material, these subfields are the places where the power relations between the students themselves, as well as with society, are most clearly demonstrated, and where the rules of each field are renegotiated. I analyze this further in the forthcoming section.

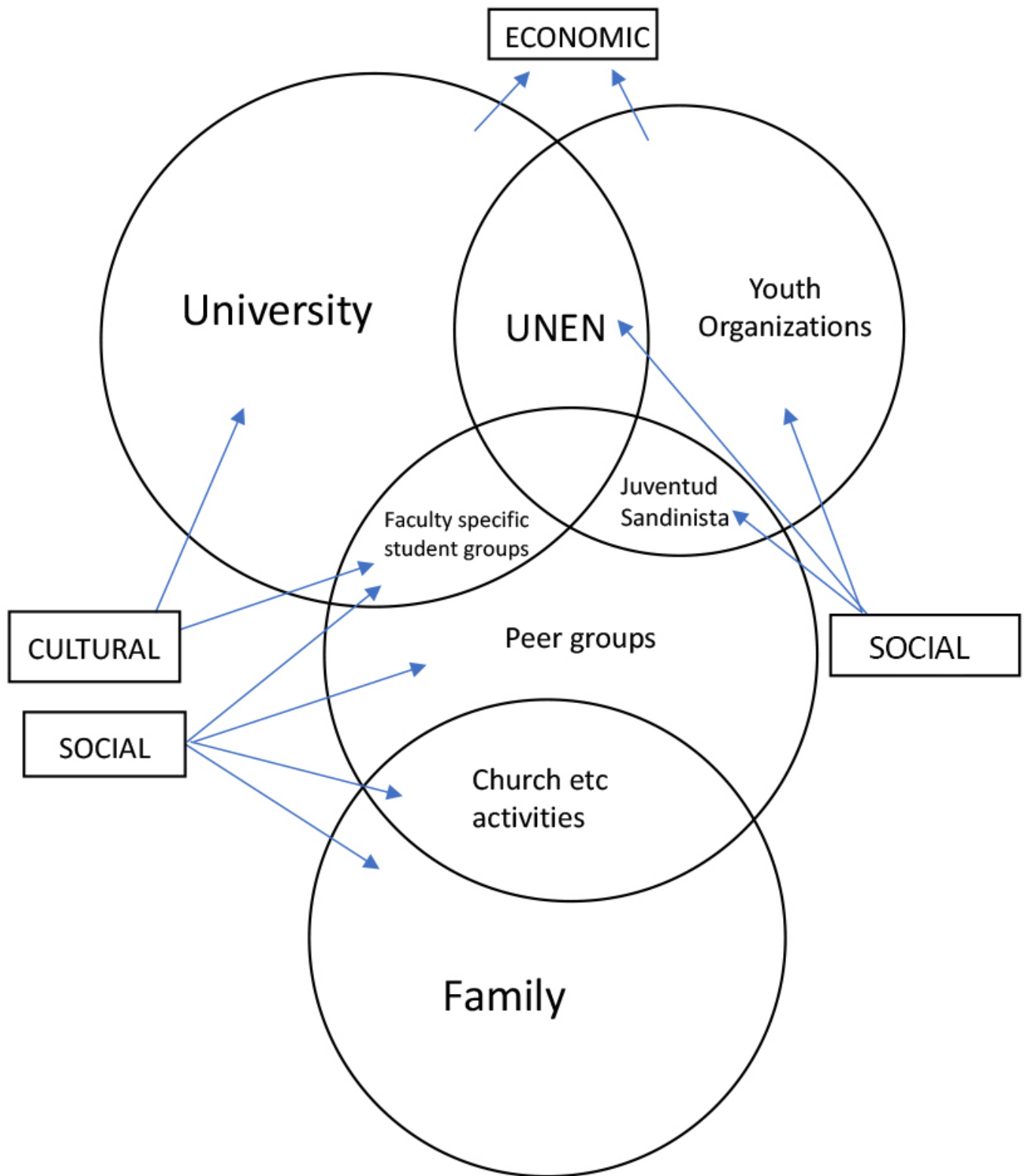


Figure 1. Presentation of identified social fields and capital used in each field.

My material clearly shows that a social field can temporarily unite people but it can also divide them. Such is the case in the field of youth organizations that overlap with the field of universities. Most participants expressed a collective identity as students, but there was a clear distinction between students who were members of student organizations, specifically the FSLN-controlled Unión Nacional de Estudiantes de Nicaragua (UNEN), and other students. As shown in Figure 2, most of the students who participated in the survey did not wish to respond whether they felt it was important to belong to a student organization or stated they did not feel it to be important, or felt it was in contradiction to their willingness to reach their goals independently. As one of the survey respondents commented: “Student Org.: no importance at all, student organizations have never interested me, I always value myself and like to go forward by my own means.”⁵⁷ It is also important to note that a considerable number of the survey respondents, a total of 69 participants, left this question unanswered, even though they answered most of the other questions in the survey. However, when I interviewed the students in Group 2, all UNEN activists, they frequently emphasized how important in their opinion the organization was. The tensions between UNEN activists and other students reflect the political tensions of the country: as the UNEN is controlled by the FSLN, being a member requires supporting specific political agendas. The UNEN, however, claims that it represents all Nicaraguan students.

Another important field that arose from my material is religion. I attended church services with many of the participants of this study. I had the privilege of taking part in Pentecostal services both in the rural countryside and in León, which included rock music played by young members of the church and a football club organized by the church, as well as in Catholic services in Managua. As I went through my field notes I noted that religion and politics were themes that were discussed among friends and family, but were often avoided when in the company of strangers, or in the presence of acquaintances from different religious or political views. During the interviews and throughout my time in the field, it became clear that both themes clearly reflect the power relations of the country, and divide Nicaraguan society. I discuss this further in the next section.

⁵⁷ Original in Spanish: Org. estudiantil: nada de importancia nunca me ha interesado la organizacion estudiantil, siempre me valgo por simismo y me gusta salir adelante por mis propios medios.

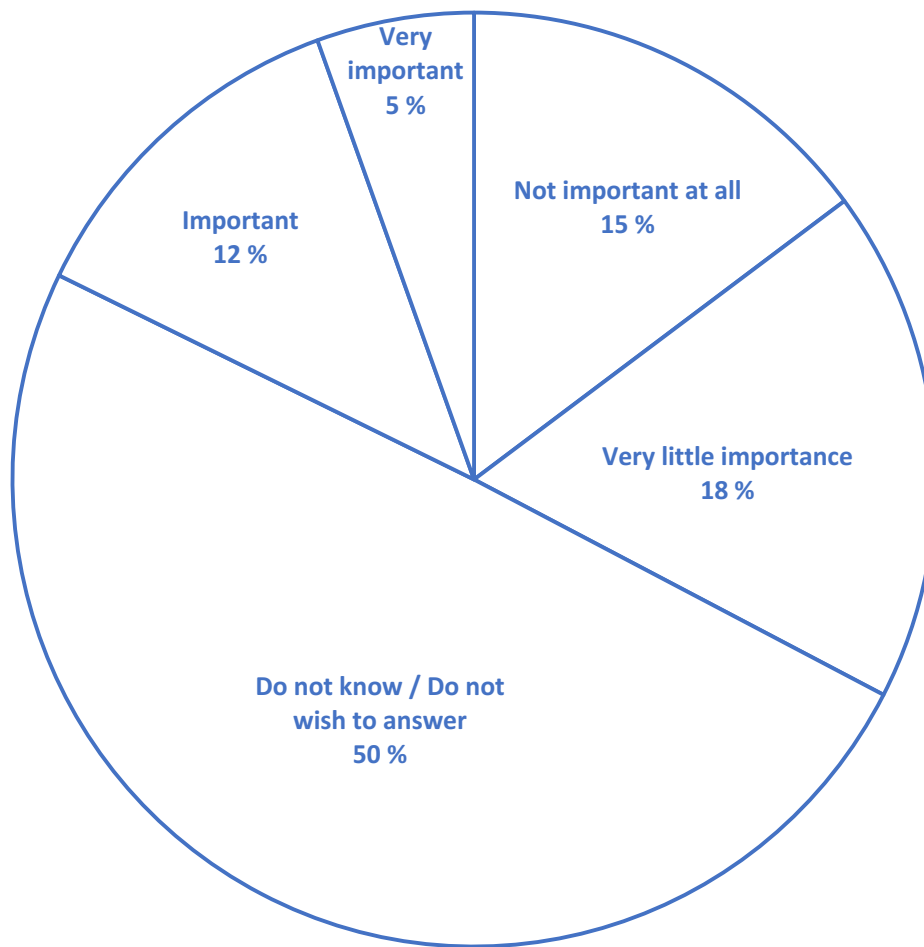


Figure 2. Survey Responses: How important is it to belong to a student organization?

Number of responses: 236

The power relations of Nicaraguan society are also reflected in the lives of the students. This is clearly demonstrated in my material, especially in the case of university and youth and student organizations. To map out the position that the students have in society, based on their own experiences, I asked the survey participants, among other things, whether they had faced discrimination or exclusion. I wish to start this discussion on a positive note, since as already mentioned in the beginning of this study, youth studies scholars are often very focused on the possible problems and inequalities. According to the responses, I felt that most of the survey participants had not faced any kind of discrimination or exclusion. This for me was very positive news. However, discriminatory practices and the youth's experiences of them tell a lot about the society and the space it allows the young to have. This discussion for me relates strongly to the previously mentioned questions of youth in general: how we define the period of youth, how we see young people, and how we expect them to think and act. In other words, what kind of youth is expected and accepted by society?

Studying at the university and university-related activities form a big part of the life of the respondents, a temporary community. Hence, I was not surprised that most discrimination or exclusion was reported to have happened at the university and among peer groups. What did surprise me, however, were the reasons for discrimination. As a European scholar, a woman, and a feminist, I expected gender-based discrimination to be one of the most reported issues. Also, having worked as a freelance writer for publications discussing gender equality, gender-based discrimination is something I myself seemed to stress more than the participants. Even though gender-based discrimination was reported to take place, questions of political ideology, age, religion and domicile were considered by the participants to be more significant than gender-based questions. The distribution of the answers is shown in Table 4. Since I believe this subject deserves more attention, I discuss questions of gender further in Chapter 9. However, these results show very clearly how what is studied and reported of a certain topic, group of people or even a country or a culture, modifies our assumptions. A relatively large number of studies carried out in Nicaragua discuss gender equality, women's movement and reproductive rights.⁵⁸ Thus, even though I know Nicaragua and Nicaraguan culture very well, I had made an assumption based on my own beliefs and previous studies that proved to be wrong. This also highlights the fact that the

⁵⁸ See e.g. Babb 2001, Bogen 2015, Gordillo-Tobar, Beneitez, Ortega, Waters and Bravo 2014, Grabe 2010, Heaton 2017, Kampwirth 2011, Luciak 2001.

meaning we attach to things varies depending on the group, the culture, and on one's position: a researcher may attach importance to things that prove to be not especially meaningful for the group or community studied (Angrosino 2007: 68).



Picture 5. Murals portraying the 1979 insurrections and revolution at the university campus of León, 2012.

According to my field notes and interviews, two clearly divisive themes that arose from my data were politics and religion. They are also very intertwined throughout the history of the country. This was reflected in the answers of the students as well. As I observed the students in their everyday activities it became quite clear that those who did not share the same political views usually did not spend much time together. Most discrimination or exclusion was reported due to political ideology or religious beliefs, and the places these were mostly experienced were at the university or among friends. Nicaragua is traditionally a Catholic country,⁵⁹ with Catholicism being the official religion until the constitutional

⁵⁹ For the history of Christianity in Latin America, see e.g. González 2008. For the history of the Catholic Church in Latin America, see e.g. Schwaller 2011.

reforms of 1894 and 1911. The bishops of the Catholic church had formed an alliance with the Somoza regime, but when the corruption and repressive practices of the regime increased it was overthrown in the 1979 revolution (Gooren 2010: 50-51). Christianity played a central role in the 1979 leftist revolution as well, as grassroots liberation theology Christians aided the guerrillas during the insurrection (Smith 2007: 1). However, when a wave of Pentecostalism swept over Latin America the religious profile of Nicaragua underwent significant changes.⁶⁰ In 1963 as many as 96 percent of the Nicaraguan population considered themselves Roman Catholics, but by 2007 this percentage had decreased to 57, while the percentage of Protestants correspondingly went up (Gooren 2010: 51-51). According to the World Christian Encyclopedia, in 2001 68% of Evangelicals in Nicaragua were Pentecostals (Wilson 2011: 32).

Facio et al. (2017: 450-451) claim that despite their diversity, Latin American countries constitute a culturally cohesive region, since the vast majority of the population are united by religion (Roman Catholicism) and language (Spanish and Portuguese). I find this to be a very bold generalization, especially since they are specifically discussing the young people of the region. According to my material, changes in the religious profile of a country, and especially among its younger population, play a central role in the society. I witnessed this change at a more individual level myself when my childhood friends in Teustepe turned to Pentecostalism. The family had been devoted Catholics as long as anyone could remember, but a few years back during the time I was conducting research for this study, the entire family, including two university students, changed their religion. The village had been constructed around a Catholic church and a park surrounding the church was a central gathering place for the residents. The road that goes around the park was the first dirt road in the village to get a pavement back in the 1990s, when President Violeta Chamorro visited the town. When the new church arrived a few years ago, a new, very easily approached building for religious service was constructed on the outskirts of town.

The activities of the church include religious services, a rock band for young members and a soccer club for children from poor families. Many families have moved over to the new church, while others remain Catholics. This has created rumors and suspicion, and many commented on these changes to me during my latest visits. Based on my field notes and my visits to the Pentecostal churches, the networks the churches provide as well as the youth-engaging activities offered by the churches have been important

⁶⁰ For the history of Pentecostalism in Latin America, see e.g. Ramirez 2014.

in the decisions of many to convert to Pentecostalism. Many young people I discussed with were first introduced to Pentecostalism by a friend or a family member.⁶¹ Gooren (2003: 352-353) notes that since the 1970s, church membership in Nicaragua has become a conscious choice made by the individual or in some cases even the entire household, as has been the case with many of the families I have had an opportunity to observe. Cooper (2018: 1-24) has conducted fieldwork among the Pentecostals of rural Nicaragua, and discusses the social purchase of religion and rural households. Yet, literature on the theme remains scarce, especially when it comes to the young.

Droogers (2014: 199-203) notes that religions inevitably inhabit cultural contexts; believers are marked by their culture just as they themselves influence the culture in which they live. Thus, a change in a country's religious profile reflects a change in the cultural situation of the world. Religious values, and being able to live according to one's religious beliefs were very important for most of the survey respondents of this study. As shown in Figure 2, almost 83% of the respondents stated that it was important or very important to them to be able to live according to their own religious beliefs. Many of the respondents made additional comments such as "I want to live like God commands."⁶² Some of the students who responded to the survey felt that religion is the best solution to all societal problems. One of them commented: "To change a country, development and education according to the religious principles of the Bible is extremely important."⁶³ Another respondent stated that "What we really need is that those who are in power honor God Almighty and then we shall be 100% better."⁶⁴ Some of the students I interviewed felt that religion was standing in the way of unifying young people. One of them explained why he felt that young Nicaraguans were unable to work together to make changes in society:

That is the thing like, I mean as a group it could be [possible to make changes], but at the same time every mind is a world, each one has their religion, political ideology etc., we could maybe be a group, but everyone has their own way of thinking, so to be united ... maybe not. Because ... these people are

⁶¹ Conversion networks and conversion has been studied in other parts of Latin America, see e.g. Smilde's (2005) qualitative comparative analysis of networks and conversion to Evangelism in Venezuela.

⁶² Original in Spanish: Quiero vivir como Dios manda.

⁶³ Original in Spanish: Para cambiar un país es sumamente importante el desarrollo y el cambio en la educación con principios religiosos bíblicos.

⁶⁴ Original in Spanish: Que realmente necesitamos que los que están en el poder honore al Dios Alteamos y así vamos a mejor al 100%

making a lot of noise about politics and most of all about religion, there can even be a fight, so to be united, I don't think so.⁶⁵

Scholars have shown that transitions to adulthood may change religious affiliations and social identities pertaining to religion (e.g. Chan et al. 2015). There is not a lot of data available about the religious beliefs of young Nicaraguans, and basically nothing about university-level students. Thus, it is hard to make any comparisons based on data. One of the few studies that discusses this theme is Sofia Montenegro's (2001) research on the 1990s cohort. According to her results, 94.3% of the respondents in her study stated that they believed in god. However, when asked for what cause would they be willing to sacrifice themselves, only 5.1% chose religious beliefs (Montenegro 2001: 140-156). Montenegro's question was based on the history of the country, where young people were willing to sacrifice themselves for the revolution. My questions were phrased very differently and I believe I might have received different answers if I had asked about the willingness to sacrifice oneself. However, what I find interesting here is the fact that the importance of religion has not decreased; it remains extremely important for students. Even though the religious profile of the country is changing, the importance of religion does not seem to have changed. My material also shows that religious communities are important in the lives of the young as sources of social capital. According to my observations during my fieldwork, the Pentecostal churches have introduced new activities to the field of peer groups in the lives of the young students. Going to church has always had a social element, but the music groups, soccer clubs and other such activities create a sub-field of social situations that combine traditional family activities, religious practices, youth organizations and peer group activities in a new way.

As mentioned before, the political division of the country has its roots in distant history, but during more recent years, politics and religion have combined in slightly unexpected ways. The slogan of the FSLN and Daniel Ortega is 'Cristiana, socialista y solidaria': Christian, socialist, and solidarity. Even though the relationship between the FSLN and Catholic Church became tense after the revolution (Gooren 2010: 51), Catholic faith and socialist ideology were both marked features of Ortega's victorious 2006 presidential campaign. Thus, on some occasions it would seem that the Catholic faith and FSLN solidarity go hand in hand. In reality, however, this is not the case. Despite the connection

⁶⁵ *Male H5, born 1986-1992*. Original in Spanish: Ese es el punto de que, o sea un conjunto podría ser, pero ya también como cada cabeza es un mundo, cada uno tiene su religión, su ideología política etcétera, podría ser un conjunto tal vez, pero cada quien tiene su forma de ser, su forma de pensar, entonces de que, que este unida ... tal vez no. Por lo que ... ahorita se está haciendo una huya con la política y más que todo por la religión, puede haber hasta un pleito, entonces que estén unidos, no creo.

of Catholicism and Ortega's 2006 campaign, his win had a lot to do with the change in the religious context of the country, his rhetoric of peace and reconciliation, as well as having a good relationship with non-Catholic church leaders (Gooren 2010: 49-50).



Picture 6. Daniel Ortega's electoral campaign posters were beside every major highway. The traditional black and red of FSLN was replaced with pink, 2011.

Many of the people I have spoken with who belong to the Pentecostal church fully support FSLN and Ortega, as is also the case with my previously mentioned friends in Teustepe, while many Catholics do not agree at all with Ortega's politics. Even though Ortega's close link with the Churches may have helped him win the vote of people from different religious backgrounds, not everyone agrees with mixing religion and politics. A respondent of the survey left the comment: "Religion meddles in shit it should not meddle with."⁶⁶ The theme of the church and politics came out in some of the interviews as well. When I asked one of the participants what she hoped for young people, she responded: "I would like young people to focus more on religion. That politics and religion would be more separate. And

⁶⁶ Original in Spanish: La religión se mete en mierda que no deben.

that they [the young] would not be so involved with [political] parties, that they would study, search God.”⁶⁷

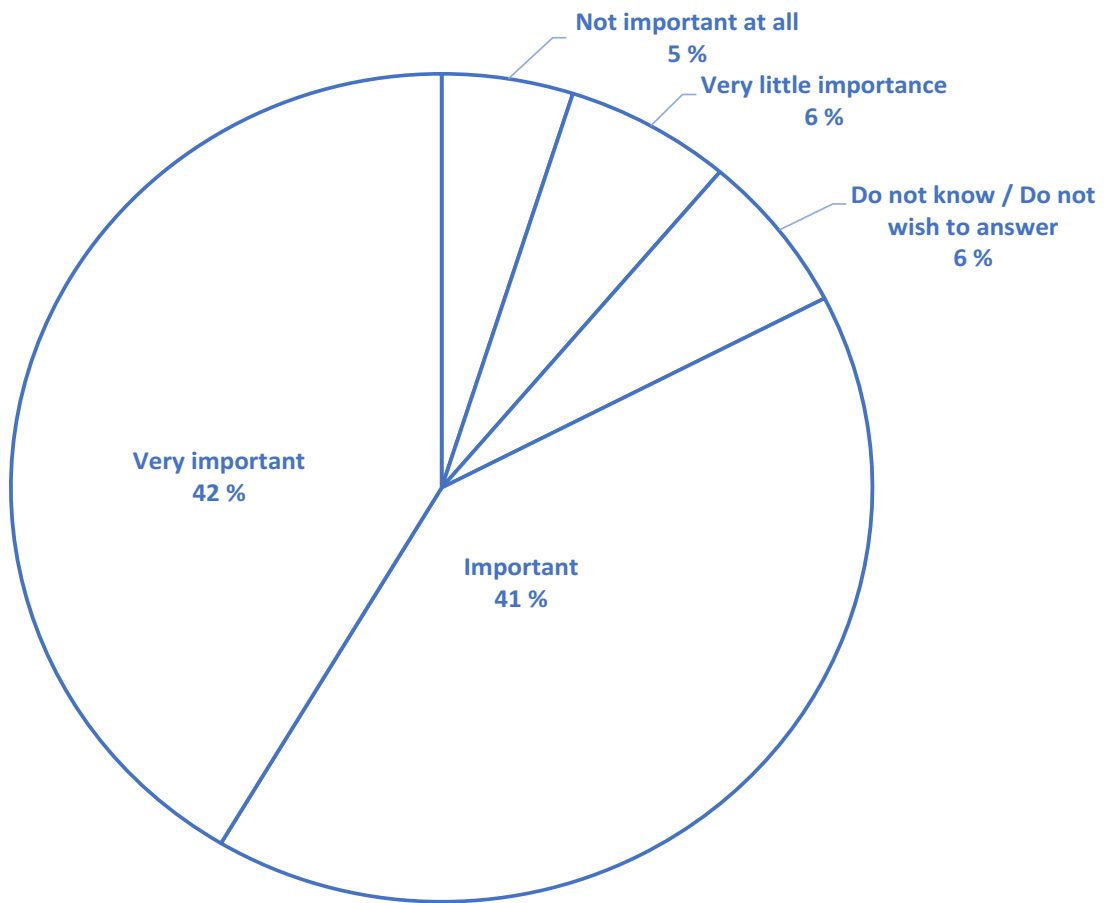


Figure 3. Survey Responses: How important is it to be able to follow one's own religious values?

Number of responses: 304

⁶⁷ *Female G4, born 1986-1992*. Original in Spanish: Me gustaría que los jóvenes se enfocarán más en la religión. Que se separaría más la política y la religión. Y que no andarían tanto en lo de los partidos, que estudiarían, buscarían Dios.

Table 4. Survey Responses: Have you experienced discrimination or exclusion?

Reason for discrimination or exclusion	Place experienced	TOTAL	F	M
Gender	Working life	1.3%	1.3%	1.4%
Number of responses: 300	University	5%	4.5%	5.5%
	Among friends	3.3%	5.2%	1.4%
	Among family	3.3%	3.3%	3.4%
Political ideology	Working life	7.0%	8.4%	5.5%
Number of responses: 304	University	10.9%	8.3%	13.5%
	Among friends	13.5%	14.1%	12.8%
	Among family	5.9%	4.5%	7.4%
Place of domicile	Working life	2.0%	1.3%	2.7%
Number of responses: 302	University	8.3%	6.5%	10.1%
	Among friends	8.6%	5.8%	11.5%
	Among family	2.0%	2.3%	2.7%
Religious beliefs	Working life	7.0%	5.2%	8.9%
Number of responses: 303	University	10.6%	11.0%	10.2%
	Among friends	17.9%	18.2%	17.7%
	Among family	10.3%	7.8%	12.9%
Age	Working life	6.6%	4.5%	8.9%
Number of responses: 303	University	8.3%	5.8%	10.8%
	Among friends	5.6%	4.5%	6.8%
	Among family	3.0%	2.6%	3.4%
Ethnicity ⁶⁸	Working life	1.0%	0.0%	2.0%
Number of responses: 301	University	1.7%	0.6%	2.7%
	Among friends	1.3%	0.6%	2.0%
	Among family	1.0%	0.0%	2.0%

⁶⁸Most of Nicaragua has a relatively homogeneous population: the ethnic minorities are relatively small in comparison to some other Latin American countries and there are not many foreign immigrants in the country. The autonomous Atlantic coast region (RAAN and RAAS) has a small English-speaking black population with a Caribbean heritage, and a small indigenous population of Sumos and Miskitos (Vanden and Prevost 2012: 537-538). Despite my attempts, I was not allowed access to universities in the Atlantic coast area, thus the results might be different had the survey been made in the RAAN and RAAS area. In total, 11 students reported they had faced exclusion or discrimination due to their ethnicity. However, none of them were from the RAAN/RAAS area.

Even though political campaigns and leaders of the country seek to unite different faiths, religion divides and unites people. According to my material, religious beliefs created some conflicts among families as well. Religion was the only topic that was reported to create equal amounts of discriminatory experiences both at the university and among the family, and was reported as the most conflicting topic among peer groups and friends. A survey respondent is stated to have experienced discrimination in several situations “by persons who have a different religion than mine and don’t think the same as my religion.”⁶⁹ Social identities, such as religion may change over time. Many studies have observed individualization in religiosity among young adults, especially during university studies, as they create their own sets of religious beliefs (Chan et al. 2015: 1555-1566). Whether this is the case among Nicaraguan students cannot be firmly stated from my material, since such a statement would require a longer study period with a specific focus on religion. Considering the changing religious context of the country, this would be an interesting subject for future research.

The responses I received also clearly highlighted the power relations of two other overlapping fields: the university and student and/or youth organizations. Spheres and institutions create boundaries for actions but also offer resources and thereby organize social life (Fornäs 1995: 6-7). Two organizations stood out from my material: the UNEN, the national student organization found in public universities is basically controlled by the FSLN, and the FSLN’s youth organization, Juventud Sandinista. If one studies at a public university, one is forced to operate within the field of youth and student organizations, whether one likes it or not, because the UNEN controls many student activities and scholarships.⁷⁰ Moreover, this is a very political field, since the UNEN is closely tied to the ruling party. Juventud Sandinista on the other hand is an open youth organizations that does not require you to be a student, just to be a member of FSLN. However, many of the students who were active in the UNEN took part in Juventud Sandinista activities as well.

The clashes of power relations seemed to happen especially in the sub-field of the university field and the field of youth organizations. This sub-field is mainly a field where the symbolic order and the rules of the field of the university clash with the internal order of the field of youth organizations. According

⁶⁹ Original in Spanish: Por personas que tienen otro tipo de religion y no opinan lo mismo que la mia.

⁷⁰ Since I am a Finnish scholar I feel it is worthwhile to note that in Finland when entering university one must become a member of the student union and pay an annual fee. Especially the liberal parties of the country have contested this on several occasions, most recently in August 2017. However, there is a big difference here: by paying a fee to the student union Finnish students receive a number of benefits and services at a relatively low cost, and are not expected to follow any political agenda. This is not the case in Nicaragua.

to my material, the field of youth organizations creates social capital: networks that can be of help after graduation in a society that is very much controlled by a single political force. These networks can be turned into economic capital later in life. The UNEN is known to be a stepping stone for government positions, and student union leaders tend to be close to middle age and intent on holding tight to their well-paid positions. A position in Juventud Sandinista may also guarantee steady employment later on, but here the difference is a lot clearer; Juventud Sandinista is a political organization that clearly produces networks based on political affiliations and symbolic prestige within the political party.

In the case of the UNEN the situation is more complicated, since the UNEN states that it is an organization that represents all Nicaraguan students. For Bourdieu, symbolic prestige is “a separative power a distinction, *diacrisis*, *discretio*, drawing discrete units out of indivisible continuities, difference out of the undifferentiated” (Bourdieu 1984: 479, italics original). Thus, a social collectivity is the result of symbolic acts as well as the classification of the members of a social collectivity by other members of the collectivity as well as by themselves. At the university and in the faculty-specific student groups, the students operate mainly by means of cultural capital, and the positions within the field are mostly defined by academic merits and skills. When entering, voluntarily or involuntarily, into the sub-field of the UNEN, the accepted capital and resources suddenly change and power relations shift. The students enter a social situation where the resources that were assumed to apply, namely classification and skills, are no longer the accepted capital, even though they were expected to be. Instead, what becomes valuable is rank based on party affiliations and personal ties and relations. Thus, the decision to engage in party activities creates social capital, but also opens up opportunities to attain symbolic prestige that can be useful later in life.

According to my material, some of the students adapted to these kinds of situations more easily than others. Those who were accustomed to adapting to different conceptual frameworks in other areas of life seemed to be able to learn the new rules of the game quickly. They were also able to move easily between different frameworks. For some these shifts seemed to be more complicated, which in my opinion was demonstrated by a reluctance to even discuss the theme or showed a complete lack of interest. Questions about the UNEN came up earlier in my Master's thesis (Pääkkönen 2011a), but tension regarding the theme of students' organizations showed surprisingly strongly in the survey responses of this research. I asked the participants how important they thought it was to belong to a student organization. 50% of the participants had chosen the option 'Do not know / Do not wish to

answer,' which I find interesting, since student organization are quite visible in the lives of the respondents, whether they like it or not. The organization itself was not specified, but 48.2% of the participants in the survey studied in public universities, where the UNEN controls, for example, many of the economic assistance programs. Thus, it is worth noting that a considerable number of students at public universities did not want to answer a question regarding the student union of their own university. This clearly shows how complicated the situation is for many students.

The participants in the first group interview brought up the UNEN themselves when I asked them whether they felt that young people's opinions are heard and respected in Nicaraguan society. All the participants were medical students at UNAN Managua. They seemed to have a close group, and their own community of medical students. "We are one big family,"⁷¹ one of them said. "No one has the capacity to agree as we do,"⁷² another student responded. The conversation they had portrays well how a position in the UNEN in the field of the university reflects the experiences the students have of society in general and how the networks created in the UNEN resonate with a position of dominance in society:

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| Me: | Do you feel that young people's opinions are respected? Are taken into count? ⁷³ |
| Male 1, Group 1 | Well yes, I think yes. ⁷⁴ |
| Male 2, Group 1 | Yes, because it is one of the rights we have. Liberty of expression and I think that here in Nicaragua we can perfectly ... we can free ourselves and express ourselves comprehensively. ⁷⁵ |
| Male 1, Group 1 | Especialty the students' section we have, the UNEN, if we say no as students it is a no, no matter who had said it, if we students think it is not correct for us we are going to rise up, we are going to talk, we are going to gather together, and we are going to be in complete agreement on what is a no because we want to be heard and we shall be heard. ⁷⁶ |
| Male 3, Group 1 | Well, there has been quite a few matters in which the students have opposed the university that we do not want this or that, and I think that is one way in which we express ourselves |

⁷¹ Original in Spanish: Somos una gran familia.

⁷² Original in Spanish: Nadie más tiene la capacidad a ponerse de acuerdo como nosotros.

⁷³ Original in Spanish: Se respeta la opinión de los jóvenes? Se vale?

⁷⁴ Original in Spanish: Pues de hecho sí, yo creo que sí.

⁷⁵ Original in Spanish: Si porque bueno es uno de los derechos que tenemos nosotros. La libertad de expresión y creo que acá en Nicaragua nosotros perfectamente... nos podemos libertar y nos expresamos ampliamente

⁷⁶ Original in Spanish: Sobre todo la parte estudiantil que tenemos, UNEN, si nosotros decimos no como estudiantes es un no, aunque lo haya dicho quien lo haya dicho, si los estudiantes consideramos que no es lo correcto para nosotros nos vamos a levantar, vamos a hablar, nos vamos a reunir y vamos a estar en un acuerdo completo que va a ser un no porque nos queremos ser escuchados y seamos escuchados.

- freely here at the university and outside in the society, and I think we are seen as a united mass, that we make our rights count, that we are not silent, we express what we feel and we do not repress ourselves, so they respect our opinions and we respect theirs.⁷⁷
- Male 1, Group 1 I think the united youth of the public universities is the strongest youth; we are the ones with the voice. The ones who are most listened to.⁷⁸
- Female 1, Group 1 Besides, now we young people have more employment opportunities now that we are in the university, in the same field that we are studying. As I said there are more opportunities to enter [the university] from different departments [of the country]. The people whom are faraway and need to surpass and should have opportunities.⁷⁹
- Male 1, Group 1 Apart from that the state, the government, has done a wonderful job in what is the union of young, to be able to coordinate in different neighborhoods, residencies, colonials of the capital, the departments and on top of that to be in contact with other young people. And to be heard even though they are not in our university, even though they are not in the public university to finally listen to their opinion as well.⁸⁰

The students who were active in the UNEN seemed to have a much more positive experience of whether they are listened to at the university or in society in general. Another interviewee, also a medical student at the UNAN, explained:

I have never felt that my opinion would not have been listened to. I have a family where we have decisions together. If there is something we discuss it in the family, and from that part I am good. At the university, I have an important role in an organization called the UNEN. There are some errors of course, sometimes things that should not be mixed are mixed but ... And at the University on the other hand they listen to opinions. Yes, we have ways to seek help.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Original in Spanish: Bueno pues han sido bastante asuntos en que los universitarios se ponen al frente de la Universidad que no queremos esto o esto y yo creo que esa es una manera de como nosotros expresamos libremente aquí en la Universidad y fuera en la sociedad y creo que también nos miran como una masa unida, de que hacemos valer nuestros derechos, que no estamos callados, expresamos lo que sentimos y no nos detenemos, que nos respetan nuestras opiniones y nosotros vamos a respetar las de ellos.

⁷⁸ Original in Spanish: Creo que la juventud unida de las universidades públicas es la juventud más fuerte, somos los de la voz. Que se mas escuchan.

⁷⁹ Original in Spanish: Además de que ahorita los jóvenes ya tenemos más oportunidades de empleo cuando estamos en la universidad, en el mismo campo en que están estudiando. Como dijo el hay más oportunidades de entrar de diferentes departamentos. La gente que está lejano y que necesita superarse y debería tener oportunidad.

⁸⁰ Original in Spanish: A parte de eso también el estado, el gobierno, ha hecho un trabajo maravilloso en lo que es la unión de la juventud, para poderse coordinar en los diferentes barrios, residenciales, colonias de la capital, de los departamentos y encima tenerse contacto con otros jóvenes. Y también ser escuchados, aunque no estén en nuestra universidad, aunque no están en una universidad pública al final ser escuchado también su opinión.

⁸¹ *Female G2, born 1986-1992.* Original in Spanish: Nunca he sentido que no han escuchado mi opinión. Tengo una familia en que siempre tomamos las decisiones juntas. Si hay algo hablamos en la familia, y en esa parte estoy bien. En la Universidad juego un papel muy importante en una organización que se llama UNEN, hay errores obviamente, se mezclan cosas que no deberían pero...y la Universidad por su parte escucha las opiniones. Si tenemos las maneras de buscar ayuda.

When I asked what things that should not be mixed do get mixed, she did not want to specify. The medical students mentioned above also shared a very positive image of future employment opportunities, which was in sharp contradiction with the preoccupation expressed by many others. One explanation for this can be that medical studies are one of the courses of study that pretty much guarantees steady employment. It also includes a mandatory practice in the poorer communities of the country as well as in public hospitals. This creates some issues since a position in a public hospital usually requires you to support the FSLN. I have heard many doctors as well as university employees state that: “En mi trabajo soy sandinista, en mi casa soy lo que quiero,” (at work I am a Sandinist, at home I am what I want to be).

A position or membership in a student’s organizations clearly creates a feeling of being heard and a space to express your opinions. The difficulty in the situation with the UNEN lies in the fact that the organization is highly politicized, or *partidario*, supportive of one political party, as many Nicaraguans express it. This creates conflicting situations in a field where students enter with the expectation of being free to choose for themselves, and is in direct conflict with ideas of academic freedom and the independence of academic research.⁸² Even though one might think that the students who study at the private universities do not need to enter this field I believe this is not the case. Since the UNEN is the biggest students’ union in the country, and very closely tied to the government, even students studying in private universities are to some extent forced to operate on its terms. Students at the private universities are not directly affected by the UNEN, but the power relations of the country are reflected in their studies. Irrespective of from where the student graduates, many employment opportunities are controlled by the government, especially if one wishes to work in the private sector, since many public-sector positions require an attachment to the FSLN. Thus, having been part of the UNEN and its networks and the possible symbolic prestige accumulated from participating in the students’ union’s activities may aid one in the transition to the labor market. This pushes young people to participate in non-voluntary ways, and also puts external pressure on what is expected of a young person. It also greatly affects their own experiences of what is expected of them in a society, a subject to which I now turn.

⁸² The concrete effects of the politicization of the UNEN within Nicaraguan universities, such as the organization’s influence on research and student choices, would be an interesting topic for future research.

8. Global, Local and Youth in Nicaragua

*El niño
que yo fui
no ha muerto
queda
en el pecho
toma el corazón
como suyo
y navega dentro
lo oigo cruzar
mis noches
o sus viejos
mares de llanto
remolcándome
al sueño.*

83

Pablo Antonio Cuadra, El Niño

In this chapter I discuss the global and local experiences of the students, and what being young in Nicaragua means to them. As we shall see, the images provided by the existing research give a restricted view of the life of the young Nicaraguans, and the narratives of the society affect the social realities of the students in multiple ways. For the students being young is both a responsibility and an opportunity. Many of the students wished to separate themselves from young people who did not study, and cultural capital, such as correct taste in music, was used to create this distinction. The students navigate within complex global and local changes. Yet, my results show that despite globalization and the increased interconnectedness of the world, locality is an important source of social capital for the students.

⁸³ The child I was has not died, he stays in my breast, takes my heart as his, and navigates within it, I hear him cross my nights or his old seas cry, towing me into sleep.

Being Young – What Does It Mean?

The previously identified social fields do not exist in a separate universe, but are tightly connected to Nicaraguan society. What a society expects of young people reflects directly on the social situations they encounter. As discussed in the beginning of this study, many of the common assumptions we make about young people are not necessarily true, and as Fussell and Greene (2002: 21) note, who falls into the youth category and what is youth is fluid and arbitrarily defined, and varies across cultures and eras. For example, the kind of rebellion against parents that is sometimes expected of the young, or the risky behavior and mood swings that Hall (1904) originally proposed, were not apparent in my material. At this point I would like to include a reminder that in the Nicaraguan educational system students usually enroll at the university at the age of sixteen or seventeen, thus they are relatively young in comparison to, for example, Finnish university students, who are eligible to enter university after their high school studies, which usually end at the age of 19 or 20, depending on the situation. As discussed later in this chapter, most students that participated in this study shared a strong faith in the value of education, cherished their family, and felt a great responsibility towards society. Since studies of Nicaraguan youth are scarce, I feel it is important to stress that the students I interviewed were very committed to constructing Nicaraguan society.

As stated before, the narrow perspective of studies conducted in Nicaragua gives a somewhat distorted picture of the country's youth, since research on youth gangs and street violence the Nicaraguan youth face constitute a big part of the current research tradition.⁸⁴ Adolescents involved in activity tied to delinquencies is not a new phenomenon in Nicaragua, but can be traced back to the 1970s (Rocha 2011: 105). Throughout the twentieth century, Nicaragua's programs pertaining to disadvantaged children were articulated in the Law for the Protection of Minors, which has been rooted ideologically in a doctrine of 'irregular situations' that classified young people into two pseudo-sociological categories. Children who were cared for by institutions such as the family and schools were 'mainstream' children, while others were minors living in 'irregular' situations, namely children and young people without families who had left school or were lacking employment. These 'irregular' situations were considered to be seedbeds of social deviance. Since the central aim of the doctrine was to

⁸⁴ See e.g. Gómez, 2007, Jones and Rodgers 2009, Jütersonke et al. 2009, Maclure and Sotelo 2004, Peetz 2008, 2011, Rocha 2006, 2010, 2011, Rodgers 1999, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2006a, 2007a, 2007b.

protect society from juvenile delinquency, minors who were regarded as antisocial or dangerous could be arbitrarily detained (Maclure and Sotelo 2003: 672-673).

However, this perspective was challenged in the 1980s, and in 1998 the Nicaraguan state formally endorsed the ideal of children's rights as a central policy concern in a legislative code called the Code of Childhood and Adolescence. Passage of the code was an important step in the discourse on children's rights in Nicaragua. Yet the state has not done much to fulfill the commitments of the code (Maclure and Sotelo 2003: 673-674). Even though gang violence is not a new phenomenon in Nicaragua, nor in Central America, the growth and influence of gangs has been unprecedented. The attitudes of many Central American governments have also tightened and many governments have taken repressive actions concerning gang control, such as El Salvador's *Mano Dura* policy that advocated the immediate imprisonment of children as young as 12 who displayed gang-related symbols in public (Jütersonke et al 2009: 373-382).

Even though a perusal of the literature on Nicaraguan youth can paint a picture of major gang violence issues, during the time I have spent in the country youth gangs have never been a really heated topic in any of the conversations I have taken part in, nor has the theme appeared excessively in the media. In the poor neighborhoods, the lazy *vagos* of the barrio are often criticized and sometimes I have come across comments on young criminals, but in general comments on the young focus more on theft, laziness or lack of morals than on gangs. None of the students I interviewed mentioned gangs or violence. However, these issues are real, and I myself have also been in situations where driving through Managua at night the taxi driver has speeded up and told me to keep my head down; peeking through the window I saw a young boy pointing a revolver at an equally young police officer. As Peetz (2011: 1459) points out, the dimensions and causes of youth violence depend as much on the social construction of youth violence as on the behavior of a country's youth. The discourses of the society, whether on youth violence or the behavior of young people in general, shape the way we see the young. Thus, I felt it was important to ask the students themselves what in their opinion it means to be young in Nicaragua.

As mentioned previously in this study, Nicaragua is demographically a very young country, and the students I encountered were very aware of this. The question of what it means to be young in Nicaragua sparked a long conversation especially among the participants in the second group discussion. The first student who responded to the question in this group discussion stated: “In Nicaragua to be young is to pretend to be the majority. The national population is ... basically Nicaragua is a very young country and the supposed society is thrown into the same construction. It is very important to reconsider this theme.”⁸⁵

Later I came to wonder at his choice of words: “to pretend to be the majority.” They seemed to reflect the fact that even though the young form the majority of the country’s population, the power of decisions, and power in general, lay in the hands of the older members of society. Many students share this feeling, as well as a feeling of obligation or responsibility. The family is of central value to most students, and an important unit in Nicaraguan society in general. As Facio et al. (2017: 451-453) point out, regard for family values is extremely important in Latin America in general. This showed in the survey responses I received. The survey respondents were asked how important it was for them to be able to help their family; 64% of the respondents stated it was very important and 32% that it was important. When asked how important it was to help those who are disadvantaged, 77% of respondents stated it was important or very important. Both values, helping one’s family and those in need in society, came up in the interviews when I asked the participants what it meant to be young. Many of them expressed a feeling of responsibility as young people towards society and their family. One of the participants in the second group discussions continued the conversation as follows:

Being young and being at home with your family, is to represent someone who is going to go forward, who is going to help the family to evolve in the best way, because in families the hope lies that through the effort one puts into one’s studies they are going to go forward. We are the future of the society, so to be young is a responsibility apart from being a privilege, a responsibility ... to change certain ideals that society in general is giving to youth ... So to be young in society is to be the best representative of the best of a country ... we can change the history of our country⁸⁶

⁸⁵ *Male A, Group 2*. Original in Spanish: En Nicaragua ser joven es pretender ser la mayoría. La población nacional esta... básicamente Nicaragua es un país muy joven y la supuesta sociedad esta botada al mismo constructo. Es muy importante retomar el tema.

⁸⁶ *Female A, Group 2*. Original in Spanish: Ser joven desde que estás en tu hogar con tu familia, son representación de alguien quien va a salir adelante, que va a ayudar que su familia se desarrolle de una mejor manera porque en las familias la esperanza está que con mi esfuerzo en los estudios ellos van a salir adelante. Y no solo eso sino que en la sociedad, que nosotros en la sociedad somos el presente, somos el futuro de la sociedad entonces ser joven es una responsabilidad aparte de ser un privilegio, una responsabilidad porque estamos ... no estamos de obligación pero ... pues si decirlo una manera ... de cambiar ciertos ideales de que generalmente en la sociedad están dando en que la juventud piense bien sus metas, y que no

Her fellow student continued:

Also, to be young is to have limitations and fulfill expectations. And the limitations are mostly the problems that exist in our country, the problems of finding employment at a young age, the problems of finishing the studies. We could say the other aspect is to fulfill what society demands of you. It is the responsibility we have as young people to move forward from a social point of view.⁸⁷

Being a student clearly means belonging to a certain community, but it is also a collective identity that incorporates many things; as Castells (1997: 7) notes, collective memory, power apparatuses, religious revelations, personal wishes and fantasies, history and geography all play a part. The discourses of young people and the narratives told in society about what young people have accomplished in the history of that society, affect how the young see themselves, or interpret what is expected of them. At the same time, these discourses and narratives highlight the difficulty of defining such life stages as youth and adulthood; how we define these life stages and why we define them as we do is temporal and closely tied to the cultural context, and the social and political circumstances of a specific time.

Blatterer (2010: 1-11) notes that young people's historical trajectory is undergoing reversals; there are explicit signs of de-differentiation between the worlds of adults and teenagers. He explains these changes as having gone from adulthood as a goal to youth as a value. While on the one hand youth as a way of life is seen as desirable since it is often associated with beauty, strength, speed, energy and freedom, characteristics such as irresponsibility, irrationality, unpredictability or self-centeredness also associated with young people are undesirable and should be abandoned. In the interviews I noticed that the students in the second group discussion underlined the same messages as in a statement found in the United Nations Youth Program (UNDP 2012), which states about youth that:

They can be a creative force, a dynamic source of innovations, and they have undoubtedly, throughout history, participated, contributed, and even catalyzed

haga cosas en que un joven realmente solo causa fracaso en su futuro, que no tenga coso de su juventud. Entonces ser joven en la sociedad es ser la representación máxima de la mejoría de un país, que si hay jóvenes responsables que podemos dar la cara y podemos cambiar la historia de nuestro país.

⁸⁷ *Male C, Group 2*. Original in Spanish: También ser joven es tener las limitaciones y cumplir con las expectativas. Y las limitaciones son más que todo los problemas que existen en nuestro país, los problemas de conseguir un empleo de temprano edad, los problemas de culminar los estudios. Podemos decir el otro aspecto también es cumplir con lo que la sociedad vos esta exigiendo. Es la responsabilidad que tenemos como joven como salgar adelantes desde un punto de enfoque social

important changes in political systems, power-sharing dynamics and economic opportunities. However, youth also face poverty, barriers to education, multiple forms of discrimination and limited employment prospects and opportunities.

What the students expressed feels like a great deal of responsibility for a young person. However, many of the students felt that helping society and helping one's family go hand in hand. When discussing themes such as de-differentiations of adults' and teenagers' lives we must keep in mind the cultural context of the conversation. The semantics of youth and adulthood, and the changes occurring in lifestyles and attitudes are different in countries with more economic stability, and are also affected by the culture of each country. Nicaragua is a poor country, and the Nicaraguan social context showed clearly in the responses I received. The poverty of the country is something that gets repeated to all Nicaraguans from childhood on and is something most of the students mentioned at some point in their interviews. Giving back and helping were values associated with being a good person, specifically a good young person. As one of the medical students in Group 1 put it:

I think that as a young person the most important value is to have a tendency ... to want to help the society, because we need to keep in mind that Nicaragua is a country where the majority of the population is poor. So it is assumed that one does not study for a profession to become a millionaire. It is expected to have professional success and through that success have a lifestyle that can help one's family, but also to have a personal tendency to say: I help in that community, I help in that church, I give consultations free of charge, I am here for you.⁸⁸

Nicaraguan history also plays a part in how students position themselves in the society in which they live. As discussed in this study, politics is something that affects everything in Nicaraguan society, and so are certain events in the country's history. Remarkable events that are still remembered in Nicaraguan society have always included the young. As Montenegro (2001: 155) states, the young people of the country were very willing to make personal sacrifices during the 1970s and 1980s. Students and young people formed the backbone of the 1979 revolution, though joined of course by many members of the general population. Later, during the 1980s, many young men fought in the

⁸⁸ *Male 2, Group 1*. Original in Spanish: Yo creo que primero como joven el valor más importante es tener la disposición... a querer colaborar en la sociedad, porque tenemos que tener claro que Nicaragua es un país en que la mayoría de su población es pobre. Entonces no se supone que uno estudia esta carrera para hacerse millonario. Si se espera llegar a un éxito profesional y a través del éxito uno pueda tener un estilo de vida en que uno pueda ayudar a su familia, pero también poder tener la capacidad personal de decir; yo ayudo en esa comunidad, yo ayudo en esa iglesia, doy consulta gratis, yo estoy allí.

contra war. Montenegro does not specify in her short statement about the willingness of the young to *sacrifice* themselves in the 1980s, she just states that they were willing to fight. I would like to note that in my experience this was not the case with everyone. Many of my friends who are slightly older than me remember clearly how in their childhood they witnessed situations where soldiers would stop buses and drag young men and boys out, forcing them to fight against the contras. Some of the families I know sent their sons out of the country during the contra war. Thus, I believe it can be stated that the revolution of 1979 was a willing sacrifice for many young people, but the civil war of the 1980s is a different story.

However, as stated before, the narratives of these times affect today's young and mold the ideas of what is expected of them. Stories and histories do not only represent and depict only physical events, but human experiences; the human activity of projecting meaning onto or finding meaning in physical and other events (Carr 1991: 20). One of the participants in the second group discussion analyzed the situation as follows:

In Nicaragua it's a particular case. Being young changes with time. Fifty years ago being young in Nicaragua was a crime because the country was engaged in guerrilla warfare. Thirty years ago being young was to go to the front to defend the country against aggression. These days being young, and above all being a young university student, has a new context. As my friend said, it is to be a person who is dedicated to changing both the present and the future.⁸⁹

In his comment, he analyzes being young in different periods of history by positioning the young against the status quo and how young people have been seen by their surrounding societies. From the point of view of the government of the 1970s, being young was a criminal activity, since it was the young who fought to change the status quo. In the 1980s the young were those who were sent to fight in the front line for the government, whether they liked it or not, and today, the government expects the young to be the ones to raise the country up. Conforming to change and conforming to the demands of society was expressed in many interviews. Many of the students are constantly balancing between feelings of privilege due to being young and having the opportunity to study and fulfill their dreams and hopes, and feelings of responsibility towards society and their family. While pondering on

⁸⁹ *Male D, Group 2*. Original in Spanish: En Nicaragua es un caso particular. Ser joven varia de una época. Hace cincuenta años en Nicaragua ser joven era un delito porque la sociedad con la de la guerrilla. Hace treinta años, ser joven era ir a la trinchera de lucha a defender al país en contra de una agresión. Hoy en día ser joven es un nuevo contexto, y más que todo ser un joven universitario. Como dice la compañera, es ser una persona que se conforma con el cambio, del presente y del futuro.

the balance of hopes and obligations, and on the past, the present, and the future, students also map their own position in the social sphere.

Interestingly, many students who discussed the changes that were taking place in Nicaraguan society used the word *conformista* in relation to nonstudents. For these respondents there are two levels and meanings of conforming: firstly, actively molding oneself to the changing times by making choices within the opportunities one has and the needs of society, and using one's potential for personal advancement in life. Secondly, conforming in a passive way to what one has, and not striving further than that. As a student from Group 2 commented:

For me in a general manner to be young is to be a potential. And according to the means we have, that potential can be for the good or for the bad. It can be said that we university students are a potential for good, but many young people out there do not use their potential for the public good.⁹⁰

Many of the students I interviewed made a clear distinction between themselves as students and young people who were not studying. The survey respondents were very divided on this matter. The students were asked on the survey whether they thought it was important to have academic friends. 62.5% of the respondents felt that it was important or very important. When asked whether they agreed with the claim that young people do not have moral values, the results were very divided: 43% of the respondents disagreed with the statement while 50% agreed. Whether the respondents who agreed with the statement included themselves or other students in the group of young people without moral values is an interesting question. I cannot make any conclusions based on the survey respondents, but based on the interviews it would seem that some of the students felt that young individuals who did not study lacked values.

The respondents were also asked if they felt that students had better moral values than other young people. The results were just as divided: 52% disagreed with the statement while 39% agreed. It is possible that the lack of a definition of what such values were resulted in somewhat unclear responses on this matter. However, it soon became clear that some respondents had strong opinions on the matter. One of the respondents made this comment: "Having studied does not mean you're better than

⁹⁰ *Male E, Group 2*. Original in Spanish: Para mí en una manera general ser joven es un potencial. Y según los medios que tenemos ese potencial puede ser para bien o para mal. Se puede decir que los universitarios somos un potencial para bien, pero muchos jóvenes que están afuera no se potencializan en lo bueno.

others and definitely not that you have better moral values.”⁹¹ Even though the distinction between students and other young people did not come out particularly clearly in the survey it came up in most of the interviews when I asked the students who they spent their free time with; did they have friends who did not study; and whether they felt they had things in common with them. Some of the students felt that there was not that much difference between students and young people who did not study, but some had very strong opinions that related studying to the personal efforts and values of a person. One of the students put it this way:

Maybe I do not think that they don't have options, because here in Nicaragua the university is public. It has to do with striving. If you make the effort you will accomplish it. I am not saying that a street child would have the opportunity to do it, but ... well, there are a lot of young people, for example, who went to secondary school but decided to start working. They aren't people who will succeed in the future. They go to a lot of parties. I would also like to party during the weekends, of course, but I'm aware that my course of studies would suffer ... so, yes, there is a difference.⁹²

Assumptions about partying and loose attitudes also appeared in other responses. One of the interviewees commented: “Those who are studying obviously wish to concentrate on their studies and progress. Others are looking out for parties and having fun.”⁹³ Another interview participant explained his opinion as follows:

Last year, I was working in Juventud Sandinista, one of the political organizations. Many young people who were not studying or maybe did not even finish secondary school worked there. Some social activities I could not do with them as I had to study ... they have an attitude that is looser, more like simply thinking about the moment, or simply thinking about working to get money. They're not thinking about bettering themselves or planning for the future.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Original in Spanish: Ser estudiado no significa ser mejor que otros ni mucho menos tener mejores valores morales.

⁹² *Female G2, born 1986-1992*. Original in Spanish: Tal vez no creo que no tengan la opción, porque aquí en Nicaragua la universidad es pública. Tiene que ver con esforzarse realmente. Si te esfuerzas lo logras. No digo que un niño en la calle tendrá la oportunidad de hacerlo, pero, este, hay muchos jóvenes que estudiaron secundaria pero ya decidieron empezar a trabajar, por ejemplo. No son personas que en un futuro van a tener un alto, ya se dedican tal vez mucho salir, las fiestas, a mí también me gustaría vivir los fines de semanas completo de fiesta, claro que sí, pero yo soy consciente de que mi carrera no recuperaría...pero si hay diferencia.

⁹³ *Female G5, born 1986-1992*. Ellos los que están estudiando obviamente están desean enfocar en sus estudios, salir adelante. Los otros están buscando como ir a fiestas, divertirse.

⁹⁴ *Male H4, born 1986-1992*. Original in Spanish: Al menos el año pasado pues, yo estaba trabajando en la Juventud Sandinista que es una de las organizaciones políticas, allí trabajan varios jóvenes que no estudiaron, que tal vez no terminaron secundaria. Entonces yo, tal vez una actividad o sea no puedo, que tengo que estudiar, y ellos, pero si esto es importante, y yo, pero también los estudios son importantes. O sea, tienen una actitud más libertina, más de pensar en el momento simplemente, o pensar simplemente en trabajar para tener dinero, no piensan en un progreso o un plan al futuro más que todo.

Some of the students actually repeated the same type of statements that were provoked by my article, published in *Confidencial Digital* (Pääkkönen 2011b), a Nicaraguan online publication. The article discussed the results of my master's thesis, mainly how the students I interviewed felt about politics in Nicaraguan society. Some of the comments were very negative and clearly indicated how some adults saw young people in Nicaragua: "The truth is today's youth leaves a lot to be desired. They no longer have any moral values because they grew up in an era of servility, extortion, and prostitution" ⁹⁵

One of the readers of the article referenced the statements of the students I had interviewed, and wrote this comment:

Most of us prefer not to talk much about politics, because it is so dirty and we do not want to stain ourselves. There are no opportunities for young people who wish to better themselves,, said one of them. It's the same always. We should change those in Nicaraguan politics; change the structures. We should give more space to different opinions. We should listen, have a national dialogue to make the country better, because that is what we all supposedly want, right? All of these things are the opinions of young people. That is why we're screwed! With this pathetic⁹⁶ youth we are not getting anywhere; they want everything to be given to them. They want to fucking fight, to fight like in Chile and London, Libya and Syria; they're going to forge their future. ⁹⁷

Some of the students themselves also mentioned these negative implications. One of the survey participants commented: "I think students don't have moral values or they have lost them because of modernization." ⁹⁸ On the other hand, the assumptions some students make of young people who are not studying portray many of the ongoing discourses of Nicaraguan society, including the value and importance of education and the importance of trying to help one's family. In general, the students

⁹⁵ Comment left by: Alma Quiroga V 17/8/2011 13:17. Original written version in Spanish: La verdad que la juventud actual deja mucho que desear ya no tienen ningunos valores morales por que crecieron en la época que el servilismo, la extorsión, la prostitución

⁹⁶ The original expression in Spanish that was used here, *ñoño* or *ñoña*, means someone nerdy or pathetic, and is often dismissively used to describe a person who is highly educated but lacks common sense.

⁹⁷ Comment left by: El Gato Vago 12/8/2011 15:52. Original written version in Spanish: La mayoría preferimos no hablar muchas veces de ella, porque es tan sucia y no nos queremos ensuciar", "No hay oportunidades para un joven que quiera superarse", dijo uno de ellos. "Es lo mismo de siempre", "Sería cambiar las personas en la política nicaragüense, cambiarla desde las estructuras. Sería dar más espacio a opiniones variadas, sería escuchar, tener un diálogo nacional para llegar a mejorar el país, porque eso es lo que supuestamente nosotros todos queremos ¿No? todas estas opiniones de los jóvenes, POR ESO ESTAMOS JODIDOS!!! Con esta Juventud tan ÑOÑA no vamos a ningún lado, todo lo quieren en la mano. a luchar jodido, a luchar como en Chile y Londres, Libia y Siria. van a forjar su futuro. El Gato Vago 12/8/2011 15:52

⁹⁸ Original in Spanish: Creo que los estudiantes no tienen valores morales o que los han perdido por la modernización.

who participated in this study had a strong belief in the importance of education. As one of the interview participants put it: “Without education we are nothing. Anyone can deceive us.”⁹⁹

Based on my time in the field, in general education is valued in Nicaraguan society. Some of this appreciation may be rooted in the very successful literacy campaign launched by the FSLN in 1980. The campaign reduced the overall illiteracy rate from 50.3% to 12.9% within a mere five months (UNESCO Institute for Education 2005). Many Nicaraguans, both young and old, are proud of the campaign and it is often mentioned in conversations as one of the great accomplishments of the country. Apart from this, the idea of education as a way forward in life is deeply rooted in Nicaraguan society. Castells (1997: 7) has pointed out that the symbolic content of a collective identity and its meaning for those who identify with it, or who place themselves outside of it, is largely determined by who constructs that identity and why. Among the students, being a student seems to be an important part of one’s personal identity, as well as a demonstration of being a responsible citizen in society. Many students wished to separate themselves from things they felt did not ‘belong’ to a student’s life or identity. The inability to maintain a conversation, a way of speaking, the use of vulgar language and even certain tastes in music were considered to be unsuitable for students. One of the participants explained the difference between students and young people who did not study:

There is a lot, a lot of difference in the way of thinking, in the way of expressing oneself. Cause there are people my age who are not studying and cannot maintain a good conversation if it is not about music, the latest, like reggaeton, things like that. But not about things such as, I don’t know, history, something about geology, something about Spanish, something about science, something about technology. It’s very different, a person who is a university student who wants to better himself and a young person of the same age who is not studying.¹⁰⁰

This response highlights an interesting point about the cultural dimensions of phenomena such as popular music, and how musical taste is used to create a distinction, as Bourdieu (1984) argues. Reggaeton is a very popular music genre around the world that these days is played on radio stations worldwide, even as background music in Finnish supermarkets. The genre has a very contentious place

⁹⁹ *Male H8, born 1986-1992.* Original in Spanish: Sin educación no somos nada. Cualquiera nos puede engañar.

¹⁰⁰ *Male H8, born 1986-1992.* Original in Spanish: Hay mucha, mucha diferencia de la manera de pensar, de la manera de expresarse. Que hay personas si en mi edad que en realidad no están estudiando y no pueden mantener una conversación bonita, mena, sino cosas como que la música, lo último, que reggaetón, cosas así. Pero no temas así como que, no sé, la historia, algo geografía, algo de español, algo de ciencia, algo de tecnología, esta muy largo mantener entre una persona universitaria que se quiere preparar y un joven de la misma edad que no esté estudiando.

in Nicaraguan society and gives rise to heated conversations.¹⁰¹ Reggaeton lyrics are often extremely sexualized and discuss life on the streets, partying and alcohol. As Samponaro (2009: 493) outlines, the genre also incorporates local music styles that are considered black or poor people's music. Thus, the music is often seen as having a race or class-based nature. In Nicaragua, people often link reggaeton to poor education, crime and low morals. Many wish to separate themselves from the genre altogether. A few friends of mine who listen to other Latin American music genres apart from reggaeton, tend to stress that even though they are poor and uneducated they do not listen to reggaeton.

Having said that, however, Christian reggaeton is sweeping through the country. Here songs built on the classic dembow beat of reggaeton have lyrics that praise Good or good Christian values. These are often heard in local buses when traveling from one city to another. I do not drive myself, thus whenever I am in Nicaragua I move around using public transportation. The drivers own their buses and tend to decorate the windshields with texts declaring either their faith or other things that are important to them. Music often creates controversy in crowded buses, since the Nicaraguan style of playing music tends to be *mucha bulla*, i.e. loud. Older people tend to protest if the music is too noisy and especially if they feel it is vulgar. Playing religious reggaeton songs, namely a combination of the new and the traditional, seems to please most passengers. Elderly passengers approve the religious lyrics and younger passengers are familiar with the musical genre.

Miguel (2014: 32-48) discusses evangelical dialogues and the music genres configured from these dialogues in the light of their interaction with secular discourses and culture. She has noted that for young people, the Christian music styles (in her study specifically Christian rock) allow them to locate themselves within a youth group as well as expressing their belonging to a specific religious group. The case with reggaeton among many students and young people in Nicaragua is similar, although in a reverse manner. A clear separation from a musical genre considered inappropriate for a student is one way of locating oneself and identifying with a specific group. It is a form of cultural capital that in part determinates one's position.

¹⁰¹ I have worked for 15 years as a professional dancer, specializing in reggaeton. The students were not aware about my career as a dance teacher with this specialism. In my experience, reggaeton divides opinions in many other Latin American countries as well, but since this study concentrates on Nicaragua, I shall only discuss my personal experiences in the Nicaraguan context. Reggaeton as a cultural phenomenon is currently an intriguing topic for scholars in both youth and Latin American studies due to the genre's popularity especially among the younger population. For an analysis of reggaeton and nationalism, see e.g. LeBrón 2011. For an analysis of the roots of reggae en español, see e.g. Watson 2014.

Knowledge of these kinds of norms and rules is vital for the students to be able to operate in the field of the university. Cultural capital, such as the ability to use correct language, a certain kind of behavior and a proactive attitude are learned and adapted cognitively when entering a university. When I compared students on campus and outside the university during their spare time, their use of language changed notably. When they discussed themes that related to their studies or to being a student their vocabulary and even the tone of voice used was different than when discussing other topics with me. When interacting with their friends outside the university or taking part in family or church activities the students operated with a different sets of rules, thus their habitus changed as well. Virtanen (2007: 270-275) has similar results from her research on young Amazonian indigenous people. Her study differs from mine in many aspects, but she reports the same thing noted here: the young are comfortable in operating within different conceptual frameworks and adapt to various social situations through different habituses.

Even though certain kinds of language use and behavior are adapted cognitively when entering university life, some of the aspects of the behavior expected of a student created controversy and conversation among the students. The students themselves brought up questions of acceptable appearance, specifically the use of formal or 'traditional' clothes, and how not wearing them affects how they are seen. When going to primary and secondary school, Nicaraguan children wear a uniform, but when entering university one chooses one's own clothes. Clothing was one of the things that were mentioned in the survey when asked about discrimination. I had not included it in the options but a few students left free comments about the matter. One of them had faced discrimination for "dressing in a simple manner."¹⁰² Another wrote that the reason for discrimination had been clothing.

Fashion and clothing are often seen as an important social sphere of identity construction, especially for young people (e.g. Crane 2012, Saucier 2011, Swain 2002). Nicaraguan society in general takes clothing seriously; they are for many a representation of a decent person and a way of demonstrating one's status. It does not matter how small or unequipped one's house is, or whether there is running water, electricity or even a decent ceiling, the children of the house are sent to school in a shiny white, cleaned and pressed shirt. As one of the students explained, when you have limited economic means it is even more important to dress in a formal and conservative manner to separate yourself from the *vagos*, the people who hang around the street corners, in front of their house or a bar all day long and

¹⁰² Original in Spanish: Por vestirme sencillamente.

do not do anything purposeful. A high respect for formal clothing can also be seen in the Nicaraguan attitude to backpacking tourists from the United States and Europe. Nicaragua has seen an economically welcome boom of tourism during recent years. Many of the visitors are young backpackers, *mochilleros* as the Nicaraguans call them, wearing flip flops, shorts, loose sleeveless shirts and short skirts. Older Nicaraguans express contempt for this type of clothing, since such an appearance is often related to drug and alcohol abuse, bad manners and loose morals, and this topic is quite often discussed among friends.

What is usually expected from young students by society, especially at the university, is a formal choice of clothing; the young men often wear slacks and a white dress shirt, and the young women either a knee-length skirt or long dark colored trousers with a dress shirt. This is a very different outfit from what students wear outside the university, when they change into jeans, shorts, and tennis shoes. However, this is something some of the students wish to change since they feel this type of outfit is imposed upon them by society and not of their own will. The students in the second group interview brought up the theme themselves. As one of them concluded:

... maybe that prototype, that of the young that the families had in the former times, who identified with what the family members were wearing. The thing is we are now at a stage where there is something like a revolution among us young. Everyone wants to be who they want to be despite our home, or what our parents think. Generally, in the university, we are in a space where we might be able to see from a wider perspective who we want to be. ¹⁰³

¹⁰³ *Female A, Group 2.* Original in Spanish: Quizás ese prototipo, lo del joven que se tenía en tiempos anteriores de la familia, que se identificó en que los familiares tenían puesto, que ahorita estamos en una etapa en la que hay como más una revolución de nosotros los jóvenes, cada quien quiere ser quien quiere ser sin importar de nuestro hogar, de lo que piensan nuestros padres.

Generalmente en la universidad estamos en un espacio donde quizás podemos ver desde una mayor perspectiva quien quiero ser yo.



Picture 7. Students coming away from a leisure-time activity in León, 2010.

All the previously mentioned elements serve as building blocks for one's identity as a student. As stated before, the ability to adapt certain kinds of language, behavior and things such as musical taste, possibly even clothing, are resources with which students operate and situate themselves within the field of the university. These resources on the other hand carry over to their life outside the university. Côté (2005, 2016) has developed a concept of identity capital, a strategic management of a 'portfolio' of identity-based resources adaptable to functional adulthood in a given society. Côté's suggestion, when elaborated further, may well be a useful tool for youth studies scholars in the future, since as Côté (2016: 4) notes, context-specific resources are particularly important in societies where many roles and statuses are no longer strictly ascribed. Yet, in the light of my results, this suggestion as such is unlikely to work in Nicaraguan society today. However, I find this an interesting suggestion worth mentioning.

In Nicaraguan society, many roles and statuses are currently in a state of constant change, and these changes are extremely important for most Nicaraguans. Apart from being a student, all the participants in this study seem to identify themselves first and foremost as young Nicaraguans. Local social networks and a sense of locality is an important source of social capital for the students who took part in this study. The family forms the base of local networks for most participants, and 96% of the survey respondents stated it was important or even very important for them to be able to help their families. 82% of the survey respondents also stated it was important or very important to them to be able to live and work in Nicaragua. When the survey respondents were asked if it was important to them to belong to a leisure-time group, such as a sports team, the answers were pretty much divided in half, with the same number of respondents stating it was important and same number stating it wasn't. Yet, as I spent time with the students it became clear that peer groups were important for most of them, as were their church communities. It is within these communities, apart from families, where the students spent a big part of their free time, received support and shared their experiences. Tolonen (2005: 343-361) reports similar results and notes that local social networks and communities can help to regain one's sense of agency, or in other words, the feeling of being in control of one's own life.

Being a Nicaraguan is a central part of the students' personal identity, while being a student is valuable social capital in the society. Even though many of the interview participants made a very sharp distinction between themselves and other students, some of them felt that young people in general, whether students or not, can and are destined to make a change:

Well the truth is that if we talk from the actual point of view of the youth, we have young people who are prepared and apart from being prepared we have good elements. In Nicaragua as well as in other countries those elements are going to advance the generation, people who can change. We always have the attitude, the character of change, because each generation is different, it is always different, we don't think the same way, every mind is a world, each has their own opinions, one says ah we will do this and others other things and from those ideas comes a great idea.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ *Female G1, born 1986-1992.* Original in Spanish: Pues la verdad, si hablamos desde punto de vista actual de la juventud, tenemos jóvenes que si han preparado y aparte de que son preparados tenemos buenos elementos. Tanto en Nicaragua como en otros países entre esos elementos van avanzar de la generación, personas que puedan cambiar. Siempre tenemos la actitud, el carácter de cambiar, porque cada generación es diferente, siempre es diferente, no pensamos igual, cada cabeza es un mundo, cada quien tiene su opinión, uno dice ah haremos eso y otros otra cosa y de esas ideas llega una gran idea.

As one of the interviewees stated, the young have dreams and plans. They may be uninformed and unoriented, but most of them have high hopes and expectations: “People my age ... dreamers, entrepreneurs, loyal ... also can be uninformed, unoriented, but have expectations.”¹⁰⁵

Whether their expectations are met or not in society is a crucial thing in the lives of young people. As Wallace (2001: 13) points out, albeit writing in a European context, young people have very different rights and responsibilities in different countries. In the Nicaraguan context, apart from education, another crucial thing is the information that young people have available when they make their decisions. Lack of information was mentioned in many of the responses I received and conversations I have had. As already mentioned, the young have historically made big changes in Nicaragua. When looking at Nicaraguan society from the outside today, one gets a feeling that the young people are very involved; there are young people demonstrating on the streets on societal matters; thousands of young people take part every year in the 19th of July celebrations, the anniversary of the revolution; and masses of young people support the FSLN’s agenda, smiling in pictures and cheering in videos; and in a way this is all true and real. However, who gets to be involved is experienced in very different ways, leaving the question who in reality expresses what the young feel: are the experiences portrayed really the experiences of the young people themselves, or what the government wishes the public to think of the young? I discuss this further in the following section.

¹⁰⁵ *Male H2, born 1986-1992*. Original in Spanish: La gente de mi edad...Soñadora, emprendedora, leal...también puede ser desinformada, desorientada, pero con expectativas.

Generation and Politics – Who Talks for Whom?

I spent the Christmas of 2014 and welcomed in New Year 2015 in Nicaragua. During that time, there were several demonstrations going on due to the Interoceanic Canal contract the government had made with the Hong Kong Nicaragua Canal Development Investment Co., Ltd. (HKND). I have been following the situation since the secret planning began, mainly thanks to a close friend of mine who is a volunteer in local environmental organizations.¹⁰⁶ During December 2014 and January 2015 I kept field notes on the almost daily demonstrations and conversations surrounding the topic. The government made a secret deal with the HKND, acting without public tender or a feasibility assessment (Chen et al. 2016: 87). Without going further into issues about the canal itself, what took place on the streets of Managua is a clear example of generational politics that is quite apparent in Nicaragua today. It turned out that the construction of the Canal would require people who have inhabited the construction area for several generations to move and lose their lands without even receiving adequate compensation. Many residents of the affected area traveled to the capital to protest.

Managua has several big *rotondas*, traffic circles that often serve as demonstration points. In December 2014, the demonstrators showed up near my house at a traffic circle situated on the only main road leading out of the capital toward the southern departments where the Canal is supposed to be built. A few days later, tens of buses filled with young people wearing pink FSLN shirts came to the same street and occupied the next traffic circle, chairs were taken out and loudspeakers brought to the place. The counter protesters had arrived. When I walked to the store one day I passed a group of these young people and asked why they were there. Many of them seemed so young that they were probably not even old enough to vote, let alone have been able to vote in the previous elections. In answer to my question why he was there, one of the boys replied: “nos dieron de comer y hay música y amigos” (they gave us food and there’s music and friends). They came from the Northern part of the country and no one seemed to know exactly why they were protesting or what they were supporting.

It is important to keep in mind, as Flacks (2007: 60) points out, that young activists are often portrayed in very negative terms – as naively rebellious at best or as dangerously deluded at worst. Thus, I wish to note that the observation presented here is an extreme example, and there were also young people there

¹⁰⁶ For further information on the canal project, see e.g. Doyle 2016, Huete-Pérez et al. 2016.

who were knowingly supporting the Canal plan in the hope of more employment it could bring. However, these kinds of demonstrations occur frequently in Nicaragua, occurring both before and during the interviews I conducted for this study. I did not ask the students specifically about the protests, but the theme came up in many interviews. When I asked from one of the students at the end of the interview if he had something additional he wanted to tell me, he brought up the protests. He described the situation as follows:

That is the problem in the society here in Nicaragua. Most of all the young people are easy ... maybe we are easier to manipulate in the sense that if I give you a shirt or a balloon you are going to do what I want. We have a need to understand more and not be so easy to manipulate. This is a problem in this society.¹⁰⁷

This comment quite clearly reflects how some young people are taken into account when it serves the purpose of the government. How young people position themselves within society is greatly affected by circumstances such as these, since, as Andrews (2007: 12) points out, the narratives that are culturally available to one shape one's identity. Andrews speaks specifically about political identity, but in my opinion this is the case with all collective identities; the narratives provided by a society affect how one identifies oneself within that society. In this case, the young are portrayed as a force for political change, but a force that is only positive if it goes hand in hand with the governing party's plans. One of the participants in the interviews who studied law at a private university brought up the political situation of the country when I asked him whether he felt that his voice was heard in society and whether he felt that young people were heard in society.

Me:	In society in general, are you heard? ¹⁰⁸
Male H9, born 1986-1992:	No. You have to belong to a political party. ¹⁰⁹
Me:	Is there a difference to which one or to a party in general? ¹¹⁰
Male H9, born 1986-1992:	Yes. The problem is that everything collapses fast. But if you say I don't want this to be done or this is bad, and these people should be replaced, they dismiss other people or kick you out of your job. It simply does not stop, you will never be heard. There are never opportunities. As I said you

¹⁰⁷ *Male H5, born 1986-1992*. Original in Spanish: Ese es el problema de la sociedad aquí en Nicaragua. Más que todo los jóvenes somos fáciles ... tal vez somos más fáciles a manipular en el sentido de que, le voy a dar una camisa o un balón y ustedes van a hacer eso. Tenemos esa necesidad de entender más para no ser fáciles a manipular. Un problema en esta sociedad.

¹⁰⁸ Original in Spanish: ¿Y en la sociedad en general se te escucha?

¹⁰⁹ Original in Spanish: No. Tienes que pertenecer a un partido político.

¹¹⁰ Original in Spanish: ¿Hay diferencia a cuál perteneces o generalmente hay que pertenecer en alguno?

need to belong to a political party to get a ... if there is no work there is no ... well (sighs).¹¹¹

Me:

Are the opinions of young people heard?¹¹²

Male H9, born 1986-1992:

Well, to listen to it ... we could not say that, due to the fact that we are unfortunately ... Nicaragua is going through a very difficult process for the country where young people are manipulated. Where they are manipulated by the media and by people who unfortunately say one thing and the young people just follow them without thinking. So the young who do have an awareness about things going on in Nicaragua and want to speak up cannot do so, because we have all seen in the news the demonstrators who want to express how they feel about the municipal elections, national elections and of the police or ... they are silenced, they are beaten up, so here in reality ... no.¹¹³

Toffler (1991), writing at the beginning of the 1990s, stated that information would be a key factor in future societies, and this is very true. In today's world, who has access to information and who has the ability to determine whether the information provided is accurate is a very real source of power or powerlessness. The ability to assess and use information is valuable cultural capital in everyday life in today's societies. I had a long conversation about this theme with another law student at a private university. We were discussing his career options in Nicaragua, and I asked him how he saw the situation in his country. He had formed similar conclusions to the previously mentioned student. He expressed what I had heard many express, a sense that many of the young people participating in the government's activities were being used to support the government's actions:

Male H3, born 1986-1992:

I think it is something really delicate. I think now that I study law ... we are in a country that is completely Sandinista, which is Danielismo. My family is Sandinista, but in this case now that I know how things are ... I think we are in a total chaos, we are in a monarchy. We want to go

¹¹¹ Original in Spanish: Si. El problema es que todo caya rápido. Pero es que si vos decís que no quiero que se haga esto o está mal esto, y hay que cambiar a estas personas, se echan otras personas o te corren del trabajo. Simplemente no se termina, nunca vas a ser escuchado. No te dan oportunidades, como te digo tienes que pertenecer a un partido político para que te den una...sino no hay trabajo, no hay...pues.

¹¹² Original in Spanish: ¿Se escucha la opinión de los jóvenes?

¹¹³ Original in Spanish: Pues, es que escuchar se...no podríamos decir, por lo que estamos lamentablemente... Nicaragua está pasando por un proceso muy difícil para este país donde los jóvenes son manipulados. Donde son manipuladas por los medios y por personas que lamentablemente dicen una cosa y los jóvenes simplemente la siguen sin saber. Entonces los jóvenes que si tienen conciencia al respecto de las cosas que están pasando en Nicaragua y quieren hablar no pueden, porque se ha visto en noticias de manifestantes que quieren expresar lo que sienten al respecto de las elecciones municipales, elecciones nacionales y por policía o...son silenciados, son golpeados, entonces aquí en realidad ... no.

forward in this country, and the truth is we are staying behind. So, I do not agree at all with what is going on right now. I think we are in a problem situation... the same state that rules, the president is doing everything badly, everything is bad in this country when it comes to work, when it comes to how he is taking his profession as the president to extremes ... there are a lot of very delicate things to talk about in this situation, but in reality there is nothing good at all.¹¹⁴

Me:

Is there something the young generation could do?¹¹⁵

Male H3, born 1986-1992:

Of course, it can do a lot, but to start with, the young generation is letting themselves go along with Danielismo, because they don't know anything about the real situation. They are young people who want to participate in things, get easy money. What they are doing is buying the young; they are deceiving them. I think all young people should study law to understand a little about the laws, about the constitution, to open their eyes and face the situation we are in. But yes I think it could do a lot for the country.¹¹⁶

Me:

Are the opinions of the young listened to?¹¹⁷

Male H3, born 1986-1992:

No, that no, there is no conversation. The government is deceiving the young people into thinking that they are the voice of the people, but no ... what they are doing to them is that they are using them to give power to the president, not to give power to them, not to give them a voice or a vote because at the end of the day what they say does not matter, it is what the president wants. They are manipulated. Of course, because they are not informed, they are not educated, they do not know how to develop the country and how it should be changed. They are letting themselves be led by what the president is saying, by what the state is

¹¹⁴ Original in Spanish: Creo que es algo muy delicado. Creo que ahora que estudio derecho ... estamos en un país que es completamente sandinista, lo que es Danielismo. Mi familia es sandinista, pero en este caso ahorita que yo sé como son las cosas ... creo que estamos en un total caos, estamos en una monarquía. Queremos salir adelante en este país, y la verdad es que quedamos para atrás. Entonces yo no estoy nada de acuerdo de lo que está pasando ahorita. Creo que estamos en una disturba ... el mismo estado que manda, el presidente está haciendo lo todo mal, esta todo mal en este país al respecto del trabajo, al respecto como se está llevando a cabo su profesión como presidente... Hay muchas cosas bien delicadas para hablar en esa situación, pero no estamos nada bien en realidad.

¹¹⁵ Original in Spanish: ¿Hay algo que la generación joven pueda hacer?

¹¹⁶ Original in Spanish: Claro, puede hacer demasiado, pero a comenzamos, a generación joven se está dejando a llevar con el aspecto de Danielismo, porque no saben nada de la situación verdadera. Son jóvenes que quieren participar en cosas, ganar dinero fácil. Lo que están haciendo es comprar a los jóvenes, los están engañando. Creo que todos los jóvenes deberían estudiar la carrera de derecho para entender un poco de las leyes, de la constitución, para abrir los ojos y para ponerse en contra la situación en que estamos. Pero creo que si se puede hacer mucho por el país.

¹¹⁷ Original in Spanish: Se escucha la opinión de los jóvenes?

saying. Without information, following a flag that is not that of the country.¹¹⁸

Me:

How could they be better informed?¹¹⁹

Male H3, born 1986-1992:

It has to do with ... well, they are informed in many ways. It's that they're manipulated everywhere. It can be family members, friends. Here the government is bombarding the radio, television. We are being deceived; it will be hard to change that. The same people who were in the war, the same people who made so many young people die for a cause that was not of benefit for the country at all, those who are above it never touches them, the ones who are dying in the country are the ones below. What I think the youth should do is to continue with their studies, inform themselves a lot about what we are going through now; go forward and not think about the government wants but to think about the family and poverty and how we are living now.¹²⁰

Many Nicaraguans make a distinction between Sandinismo, supporting the ideals of the revolution and the principles the FSLN had at the beginning of its political journey, and Danielismo, which refers to the current politics of the party, which are centered around President Ortega. Thus, it is possible to be a Sandinist and yet completely oppose the politics of the current government.

Politics in general seems to be a delicate and confusing theme for many of the participants in this study. I included some direct questions about politics in the survey, but they were relatively few in comparison to other themes. However, immediately after the first question that mentioned politics one of the respondents wrote: “mmm ... for what political party is this survey for???”¹²¹ Many scholars have reported a lack of interest in political activity and civic engagement among young people (e.g. Delli

¹¹⁸ Original in Spanish: No, que no, aquí no hay una conversación. El gobierno está engañando a los jóvenes a creer que ellos son la voz del pueblo, pero no...lo que están haciendo a ellos es que les están radicando para darle poder al presidente, no para darle poder a ellos mismos, no para darles voz ni voto, porque al final lo que ellos digan no importa, es lo que el presidente quiera, son manipulados. Claro, como no están informados, no están educados, no saben como desarrollar el país y como debería cambiarlo. Ellos se están dejando a llevar por lo que el presidente dice, por lo que el estado les hace creer. Sin información, siguiendo una bandera que no es la del país.

¹¹⁹ Original in Spanish: ¿Cómo informales más?

¹²⁰ Original in Spanish: Se trata de que...bueno, están informadas por muchas maneras. Es que están manipulados por todas partes. Puede ser familiares, otras amistades. Aquí el gobierno está bombardeando lo que es radio, televisión. Estamos engañados, va a ser muy difícil cambiarla. Los mismos personajes que estuvieron en la guerra, los mismos personajes que hicieron que tantos jóvenes se murieran por una causa tan poco proactiva por el país, los que están arriba nunca les toca, los que están muriendo en el país son los del abajo. Creo que lo que debería hacer la juventud, es seguir con sus estudios, informarse bastante de lo que estamos viviendo, salir adelante y no pensar en un gobierno, sino que pensar en la familia y la pobreza y en lo que se está viviendo.

¹²¹ Original in Spanish: mmm...para que partido político es esta encuesta???

Carpini 2000, Henn et al. 2000, Thomson et al. 2004, Youniss et al. 2002, Åmna and Ekman 2014). The United Nations World Youth Report on youth civic engagement states that one aspect behind low youth participation in institutional political processes globally is the lack of regulatory mechanisms facilitating youth participation (United Nations 2016). In Nicaragua, organizations such as Juventud Sandinista seek to activate young people and facilitate their participation. However, the organization is tied to one party, and many other smaller organizations that advocate for the young do not really get their voices heard.

Even though politics is a sensitive theme in Nicaragua, most participants had an opinion about it and many wished to discuss politics. Most of the participants also considered that voting was important. This is in line with the numbers presented about Latin America in the United Nations report; of the countries surveyed, the young people of South America¹²² were most likely to vote (United Nations 2016: 69). Many of the students felt that having some basic knowledge of politics and understanding the importance of activities such as voting was part of their civic duties as students. However, when the survey participants were asked whether they thought that if all the options in a vote were bad it is better not to vote, 58% of the participants agreed. Thus, the complicated political situation, and the unclear results and lack of transparency of the previous elections had clearly affected the opinion of many students. My material also shows that the ability and skills to navigate the complex network of civic engagement opportunities is also a powerful form of cultural capital that can be accumulated through studies. Since the political situations, local bureaucracy and corruption make even some quiet basic tasks, such as applying for an ID card, very complicated, the skills to handle these tasks and situation is extremely important.

The question that most divided the respondents of the survey also had to do with politics. I asked the respondents whether they agreed with the statement that politics did not work and that it would be better to seek out other forms of action. The responses were very divided, as shown in Figure 4. The differences in opinion were also evident in the free comments made in the survey. Some had a very clear opinion on the matter. “Politics is disgusting,”¹²³ wrote one respondent. A few students commented that the problem is not politics but the use to which it is put: “It is not that politics is not of use, but it

¹²² The UN survey does not include Central American countries; the specific countries surveyed were Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Peru and Uruguay. Thus, it would be interesting to know what would be the results had the same survey been conducted in Central America.

¹²³ Original in Spanish: La política es un asco.

is used in a bad way,”¹²⁴ wrote one. Another commented: “Politics does work, but the use is incorrect (the form) politics take and very few have moral values.”¹²⁵ Many thought that the problem was the political leaders in Nicaragua, not politics itself, as one respondent commented: “Politics is necessary, what is not of use are the political leaders.”¹²⁶ How and for whom politics is used was something that concerned many of the interview participants as well. Another student who brought up the same theme concluded:

In Nicaragua above all we should work to create more social consciousness, more social impact especially on the part of young people so that we would be more taken into account. There is talk about politics where the young people are presidents, the young people matter, but really, they only serve to be in the streets with a flag and to publicize for a political party, but actually they are not exercising their opinion, that they need to progress with their studies, that they need to find a job...really it is not the young people whom are heard, it is the people who are controlling the country whom are heard, but the young people we are not consulted.¹²⁷

As expressed in the previous opinions, some of the participants felt adults in positions of power are toying with young people, misinforming them and leading them to think that they have real power in their hands. However, some of the students thought the contrary, namely that the government and society did offer room for expression, but many young people just did not make the effort to avail themselves of that opportunity. Those who felt this way were mostly either UNEN activists or had a position in Juventud Sandinista. As concluded in the previous chapter, members of these youth organizations share a more positive image of the situation of the young in society. A student in a private university and a member of Juventud Sandinista explained:

The space [to express one’s opinions] has always been there, it is just that you need to empower yourself. That is to say, with many young people the problem is one of attitude. Most of them are conformists, and they do not seek how to drive themselves, how to better themselves every day. I do not know, if they continue with that attitude the space will remain occupied with other types of people, other types of

¹²⁴ Original in Spanish: La política no es que no sirva, sino que es usada de una mala manera

¹²⁵ Original in Spanish: La política si sirve, pero el uso es lo incorrecto (la forma) y los valores morales muy pocos los tienen.

¹²⁶ Original in Spanish: La política si es necesaria, lo que no sirve son los líderes políticos.

¹²⁷ *Male H2, born 1986-1992.* Original in Spanish: En Nicaragua sobre todo deberíamos que trabajar para hacer más conciencia social, más incidencia social por parte de los jóvenes para que estemos mejor tomados en cuenta. Se habla de una política donde los jóvenes son presidentes, los jóvenes tienen que ver, pero realmente solo sirven para estar en la calle con una bandera y publicitar por un partido político, pero realmente no están practicando su opinión, que necesitan para salir adelante con sus estudios, para encontrar un trabajo...En realidad no se está escuchando a los jóvenes, se está escuchando a la gente que está controlando el país, pero los jóvenes no somos consultados.

people, adults maybe, who already have a model of let's do these thing like this. Young people do not enter because they conform to (the idea) that that is how it is going to be.¹²⁸

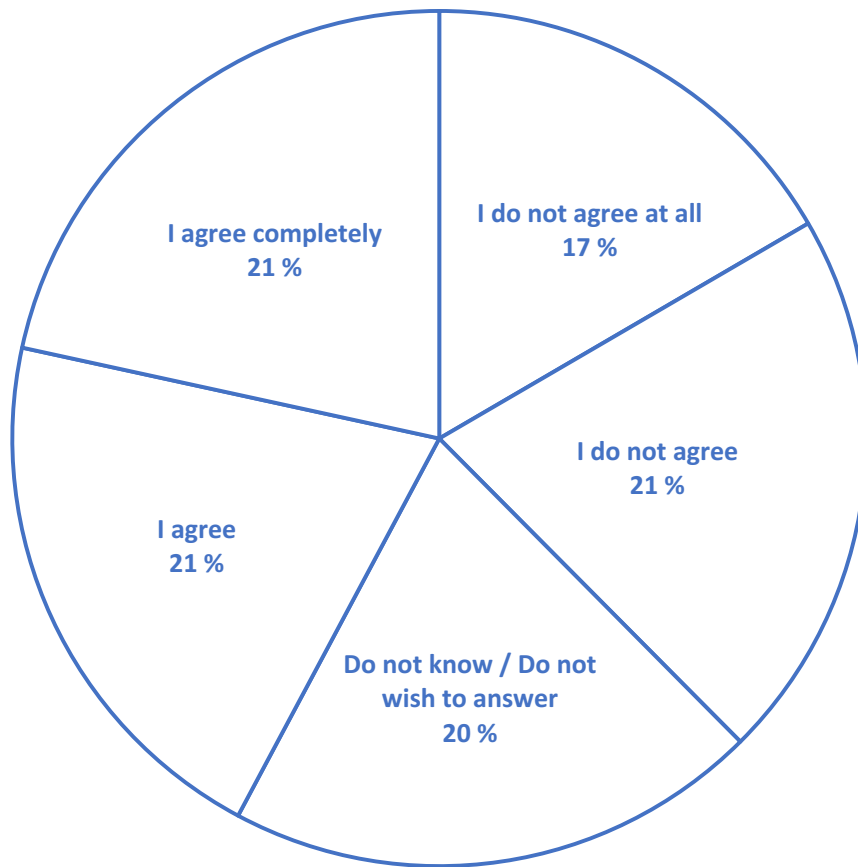


Figure 4. Survey Responses: Do you agree with the statement that politics does not work and it would be better to seek out other ways?

Number of responses: 301

Even though many who do not belong to the ruling party expressed strong criticism about its actions concerning using young people, there were those who felt there was something positive about it as well. One of the students explained that even though she felt that the government was only taking into

¹²⁸ *Male H4, born 1986-1992*. Original in Spanish: El espacio siempre ha estado es solo que hay que empoderarse de ellos. O sea, con muchos jóvenes el problema es la actitud. Son conformistas la gran mayoría, no buscan como impulsarse, como superarse cada día. No sé, si siguen con esa actitud el espacio va a seguir siendo de otro tipo de personas, otro tipo de personas, la gente adulta tal vez, que ya tienen un modelo que vamos a hacer las cosas así. No entran jóvenes porque se conforman que así sea.

account the young people who supported them, she saw it as a good thing since the young were being taken into account at least to some extent:

- Me: Are young people's opinions listened to?¹²⁹
- Female G6, born 1986-1992: Actually no, not that much. They are heard when they go on strike or something, so that they would really be listened to, because they are not listened to.¹³⁰
- Me: Is there some important event that has drawn your attention?¹³¹
- Female G6, born 1986-1992: For example, the presidential elections. That has been very important because not all governments are taking young people into account, so in that as well.¹³²
- Me: Is the government taking students into account?¹³³
- Female G6, born 1986-1992: Well, this is the truth, I am not of that party but I have seen that they are making these groups and things like that. That seems good to me even though the ones they are taking into account are only between themselves, the others no.¹³⁴

The discussion in this chapter is a real-life example of the complexities discussed in a more theoretical manner among youth studies scholars: the differentiation of the groups of different age status or life stage, the dominance of one over the other and how to define where one group begins and the other ends. It also highlights how the state and state-related actors also define youth. As already mentioned in this study, due to the current changes in societies some scholars have introduced new stages such as emerging adulthood (Arnett 2004), and seek to move away from transitional approaches, as do Wyn and Woodman (2006; see also Woodman and Wyn 2013) when suggesting that the notion of a generation offers a more effective way of conceptualizing youth. I feel it is important to point out that in a way this study is also part of an age-related phenomenon. I am interpreting the lives of the young as an older scholar. However, based on my own experiences when conducting this study, I tend to agree with Raby (2007: 50) that even though an adult conducting research among the young may be seen as

¹²⁹ Original in Spanish: ¿Se escucha la opinión de los jóvenes?

¹³⁰ Original in Spanish: La verdad no, no tanto. Se escucha cuando hacen huelgas o algo, para que en realidad se escuchen, porque no se escucha.

¹³¹ Original in Spanish: Hay algún evento importante que te ha llamado la atención?

¹³² Original in Spanish: Por ejemplo las elecciones presidenciales. Ha sido muy importante, porque no todos los gobiernos toman en cuenta la juventud, entonces en ese aspecto también.

¹³³ Original in Spanish: ¿El gobierno está tomando en cuenta los estudiantes?

¹³⁴ Original in Spanish: Bueno, este, la verdad yo no soy de ese partido pero si he visto que hacen grupos y cosas así. Me parece bien la verdad aunque todos los que toman en cuenta es solamente entre ellos mismos, entre ellos, a los demás no.

an outsider, the outsider status can sometimes be an asset. In my case, many students considered me someone who had already lived through the difficulties of being a student and thus felt I could understand their situation. Despite this, and even though there is no political agenda behind this study, it of course reflects my assumptions, including the assumptions that academic studies tend to have about young people. One of the participants in the survey who I later interviewed commented on how he felt society in general views young people:

Just the observation that ... I commented to a friend what I remember from the survey ... and I told him that most of all it had to do with the relation between young people and society, political aspects, aspects of societal problems. The only thing that always when asked an opinion ... I always say that the young person must have some problem to be asked.¹³⁵

Another participant who took part in the survey wished to talk to me in an individual interview specifically about how he felt the questions posed reflected assumptions I had made about the students, and how he saw life:

With the survey I felt like all of a sudden the questions were like placed in a unidirectional way. Like ok noting, noting, but at one point I felt like they are placed in a unidirectional line, because for me apart from the fact that I do not know very well all the problems I believe that many of the things are influenced by many factors. Because for me, how I began to know life, I began to know life starting from theater, analyzing the life I noticed that life is not a single line but one that goes on and all of a sudden something hits you. With respect to my course of study, it is like, I don't know, like strange to me, I do not believe much in destiny but ... I am graduating, I am completing my thesis, and analyzing all that trauma of after graduation, trying to find a job ... and wish to ask myself if I really entered [university] because I wanted to enter it. In this part of the survey I think it is like leading to "Do you know?" It is like the investigator presupposes that if the young person knows something, then he is a capable and active social agent, and really it is not like that. Often we do not know, at other times we do know but we don't act.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ *Male H5, born 1986-1992*. Solo la observación de que...yo le comentaba a un amigo que me acuerdo más o menos de la entrevista...y le dije que más que todo se trata la relación joven-sociedad, aspecto político, aspecto problema social. Lo único que siempre cuando piden opinión...siempre digo que el joven debe tener un problema para que pregunten.

¹³⁶ *Male H1, born 1986-1992*. Original in Spanish: Con la encuesta sentí que de repente las preguntas como que estaban colocados de manera unidireccional. Como que está bien, notando, notando, pero a un momento yo sentí que como que están colocados en una línea unidireccional, porque para mí aparte que no conozco muy bien todo el problema, creo muchas de las cosas en la encuesta están influenciadas por muchos factores. Porque para mí, como conocí la vida, empecé a conocer la vida a partir de teatro, me di cuenta analizando la vida que la vida no es una línea sino que de repente uno va caminando y algo le golpea. Con respecto a elegir mi carrera, es como, no sé, como raro para mí, no creo mucho en el destino pero...yo estoy terminando, estoy haciendo mi tesis de pregrado, y analizando todo ese trauma de post salida de la carrera, buscando trabajo...y quiero preguntarme si realmente yo entre porque quería entrar. En este parte yo pienso que como que está dirigida a ¿conoce? Es como que el investigador presupone que si el joven conoce es un agente social capaz y activo, realmente no es así. Muchas veces no conocemos, otros conocemos pero no actuamos.

His answer reflects how studies on Latin American youth often portray the young: the theoretical centrality of the concept of generations orients the field toward a strong association between youth agency and social change (Coe and Vandegrift 2015: 132-153, Gordon and Taft 2011: 1499-1527). The generational framework of Latin American youth studies has been criticized for obscuring the political identities of young people and underestimating their ability to theorize their political practices (Bermúdez and Martínez 2010: 89-112). Thus, whether we like it or not, studies such as this and the theories we use shape the way we see the young and how the young see themselves. The frameworks we use affect the results we present, and these results can directly or indirectly affect youth policy. Despite the critique some participants expressed, the survey in this study sparked an interest in some who did not usually pay attention to themes such as those presented in this study. One of the interview participants who had taken part in the survey commented on the reaction of her friends when I asked whether she had something additional to tell me:

Me:	Thank you for taking the time to discuss things with me. Is there something else you would like to tell me? ¹³⁷
Female G1, born 1986-1992:	Yes. My fellow students in my department are very passive. Well, they wanted to see the survey and they had a reaction I did not expect. They got very interested, they asked me what it was, they said the questions were very good, most of all the questions about politics. ¹³⁸

Even though many of the themes concerning the students relate very directly to Nicaraguan society and to local everyday situations, global changes form a big part of the life of the young. In the next section I address the questions of local and global life, media, communications and the concept of virtual capital, and locality as a field of accumulation of social capital.

¹³⁷ Original in Spanish: Gracias por tomar el tiempo para conversar conmigo. ¿Hay algo adicional que me quieras contar?

¹³⁸ Original in Spanish: Si. Mis compañeros de mis secciones son bien pasivos. Pues, querían ver la entrevista y tuvieron una reacción que yo no me esperaba, se interesaron mucho, me preguntaron que era, dijeron que las preguntas eran muy buenas, pasaron minutos leyendo la cosa, que ellos no están comprobados a hacerlo, y sobre todo las preguntas políticas.

“What the fuck would I know about the Arab Spring?”¹³⁹ This is what one of the survey respondents commented on a question about the importance of the Arab Spring. The survey respondents were presented with a range of questions of global and local events and asked how important they felt them to be. The response highlights an important point: when looking at the world through a European, or even a North American, lens one can easily assume that the events touching our lives interest and touch the lives of others as well. When asked about global events such as 9/11, the Arab Spring, or international climate conferences, most of the respondents stated they did not know or did not wish to answer. Some left parts of these questions unanswered altogether, or some simply answered that everything is extremely important. It should be noted, however, that the questions about global and local events were at the end of the survey, and it would seem that some respondents were already bored, uninterested or simply keen to get on with their day, and thus did not pay much attention to the last parts of the survey.

However, the reality is that Latin America is a big region with a lot going on in its own cultural sphere. As Nayak (2003: 4-5) points out, despite the historical and structural changes that are occurring around the globe, local cultures have not been superseded by global change; indeed, place and geography matter more than ever. This was evident in my material as well. Thus, it is understandable that the many events that are taking place in Latin American countries are of more of interest to Nicaraguan students. Of the questions on global and local events, the question that provoked most comments concerned the importance of the re-election of Daniel Ortega. Several respondents left comments saying that the constitution had been violated. This was probably also because the elections and changes to the constitution were recent events when I conducted the interviews. In general, local events were most familiar to the students and were considered most important. However, the respondent's interest also depended on the topic at hand. A question regarding global economy was important for most of the students, and many left comments where they stated they were worried about their work opportunities. The students were aware of the effects that global phenomena, such as changes in the global economy, had on their local opportunities. Here, their interest was quite strictly related to events and phenomena that had a direct effect on their everyday lives. This is quite understandable, since most of the students were reflecting on the opportunities they would have after graduation.

¹³⁹ Original in Spanish: Que puta se yo de la primavera árabe?

The processes of modernization, globalization and transnationalism affect the lives of young Nicaraguans, and, as stated above, the students were aware of this. As Droogers (2014: 196) notes, nowadays when people construct their life and identity they draw from these three interconnected processes that although global, tend to manifest themselves in many people's lives primarily in local experiences. In the Nicaraguan context, one very concrete example of the effect of global changes on the local level would be the previously mentioned canal project. On a more abstract level, each of the students I interviewed for this study reflected on and analyzed their own position and identity against the global world; specifically, the opportunities they had in Nicaragua and the opportunities elsewhere. When conducting the interviews, I noticed the same thing that Droogers (2014: 197) discusses: since the traditional boundaries have been altered, a universal cultural capacity is needed to operate in an expanding world, and people have needed to learn which repertoires to consult in which situations. Some of the students who participated in this study were quick to adapt to different situations and easily discussed the effects of global changes. Some seemed more reserved. Those who were more active in their approach to change or had more previous contact with the world at large, seemed the most adaptive.

Most of the students I talked with had never been abroad or told me they had mainly visited some of the neighboring countries. Most Nicaraguans have very limited economic means, thus traveling abroad is a privilege only a few can enjoy. Many families have relatives who have immigrated to the United States or Costa Rica, and they receive news mostly through their families. After the revolution, several international donors and organizations wished to collaborate with the FSLN in building the country. As mentioned in the introduction of this study, I myself encountered Nicaragua indirectly through one of those organizations. During the 1990s most foreigners in the country were international workers, and many Nicaraguans had had at least some kind of contact or conversation with someone from abroad. These days most foreigners seem to be backpacking tourists, and at least in my experience the communication between locals and tourists is quite limited. For example, in the second largest university city of the country, León, many students I talked with had never had much interaction with tourists, even though León today has a booming tourist industry. However, León's tourist services, restaurants and hostels are somewhat separated from the local life. Thus, for some of the participants I was the first non-Latin American person they had ever talked to.

For financial reasons, the contact most young people in the country have with the international world is either through TV, newspapers or the Internet, or by keeping in touch with relatives who have moved abroad. The medias most followed by the survey respondents are presented in Table 5. According to the survey responses, national TV channels seemed to be the most common source of information. Many survey respondents stated that they also listened to local radio channels. The most typical form of interaction for many of the students I talked with was through the local news channels or Internet news forums.

Table 5. Survey Responses: What type of media do you follow and how often?

Type of media	Frequency:	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Never
Uses Internet for studies		53.79%	36.9%	8.97%	0.34%
Searches news on the Internet in their spare time		26.13%	33.45%	22.65%	17.77%
Reads national newspapers		21.99%	34.02%	31.62%	12.37%
Reads international newspapers		9.69%	24.57%	24.57%	41.18%
Watches news on national TV channels		43.25%	36.3%	14.19%	6.23%
Watches news on international TV channels		22.49%	37.37%	24.91%	15.22%

Number of responses: 291

For some, online games had turned into a forum to discuss social and political themes. One of the students explained how he interacted with the world outside Nicaragua: “Mostly through the Internet, online games. I play a Spanish game quite a lot so I speak with people from Chile, Argentina, Spain. We have our debates about world politics.”¹⁴⁰

Young people and computer games have been studied from many perspectives: as tools of education for 21st-century citizens (Presnky 2006); through the girls’ game movement and the ‘commodification of gender’ (Cassell and Jenkins 1998); and as the ‘computer gaming cultures’ of children (Fromme 2003), to name a few. Beavis (2008: 54) goes as far as to state that “computer games come to epitomize the ways in which contemporary identities, expectations, and understandings about the world may be shaped and influenced,” and provide opportunities to explore how young people are positioned within

¹⁴⁰ *Male H4, born 1986-1992*. Original in Spanish: Más que todo por internet, juego juegos en línea. Yo juego bastante un juego que es español entonces hablo con gente que es de Chile, Argentina, España. Tenemos nuestros debates de la política mundial.

global culture. This study does not focus specifically on computer or online games and the topic came up in conversations about globalization, thus I cannot make any general statements about online gaming. But despite this, I find it interesting how a leisure-time activity that is often seen as a waste of time or even harmful – even by some of the participants of this study – can turn into a forum for discussing global issues and for positioning oneself in the process.

Apart from online and computer games, the effect of social media on the lives of the young is a flourishing topic of study. Social media and young people have been studied specifically in the context of identity formation and social participation: social media can offer young people ways to engage and develop a sense of identity (Boyd 2014); they can be a facilitator of political engagement (Xenos et al. 2014) or communication (Loader et al. 2014); and a platform for new types of youth activism (Jenkins and Zimmerman 2016, Velazquez and LaRose 2015, Valenzuela 2014). During discussions with Group 2 participants, I asked the students whether they use social media. Everyone did, but many had mixed feelings about them:

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| Me: | Do you use social media? ¹⁴¹ |
| Male A, Group 2.: | Well look ... either directly or indirectly I think we all end up occupying them [social media]. It is the only way ... ¹⁴² |
| Male B, Group 2: | These days the social networks have become a necessity for people. We use them a lot for work as well. We are already abandoning emails because the social networks give us more options. ¹⁴³ |
| Female A, Group 2: | But in the sphere of social media I think we are facing a phenomenon, well if you can call it that, but well I want to call it that now ... I think it has its advantages and disadvantages, because in general we do not use it a hundred percent to inform or educate ourselves [general laughter]. And not only at the universities, because that is what is happening, you go to a company, and well talking statistically or whatever of ten people in that company maybe nine have Facebook open. So I think it has advantages and disadvantages and not only in Nicaragua but the entire Latin America. What is happening |

¹⁴¹ Original in Spanish: Utilizan redes sociales?

¹⁴² Original in Spanish: Pues mira ... de manera directa o indirecta creo que todos terminamos ocupándolos [redes sociales]. Es la única manera ...

¹⁴³ Original in Spanish: Hoy en día las redes sociales han vuelto una necesidad para las personas. Lo utilizamos mucho para los trabajos también. Estamos dejando ya lo que son los correos electrónicos, porque a veces las redes sociales nos dan más opciones.

with these technologies? There is something going on that we cannot set aside, the disintegration of families.¹⁴⁴

Male B, Group 2: Values.¹⁴⁵

As the effect of social media on values and families was mentioned, all the students in the room nodded approvingly. I asked them to specify what they meant. Many explained that they worried when their younger sisters or brothers only played video games; some were concerned whether the families spend enough time together, and several expressed uneasiness about the amount of violence on the Internet, on television and in movies.¹⁴⁶ Some commented that the TV news and local newspapers contain even more violence than many games. As we discussed these issues, one of the students wished to return to a previously mentioned theme on social media, media and the availability of information. This student brought up an interesting distinction in comparison to the previously discussed opinions of many students who did not belong to the UNEN or Juventud Sandinista, who felt that the young are manipulated. The participant, who himself belonged to both organizations mentioned, explained his point of view as follows:

I wish to take up again the theme of media and social change, because the problem when talking about social media, the Internet, Facebook, these type of things, well that type of thing does not necessarily come to someone who settles in a district, they don't necessarily reach the ones in need ... and I say this because the media in Nicaragua leaves a lot to be desired, the TV journalism, radio and newspapers. We know that Nicaragua has historically been a polarized country, and there are things that leave a lot to be desired. So a citizen who is in one of the districts and listens to maybe the radio and they say there is going to be a war, how is he going to know there is not going to be a war if the only thing that reaches him is a radio that manipulates him? I'll give you an example of what happened to me when I was involved in the elections of Commander Ortega in 2006. A comrade says to me almost crying, look, it

¹⁴⁴ Original in Spanish: Pero en el campo de las redes sociales creo que todos estamos ante de un fenómeno, pues no sé si se puede llamar así, pero bueno yo lo quiero llamar así este momento, creo de que tiene su ventaja y su desventaja, porque generalmente no las utilizamos cien por ciento para informarnos y educarnos. Y no solamente en las universidades, porque que es lo que está ocurriendo, vos te vas a una empresa y pues hablando con estadísticas que se yo de diez personas de una empresa quizás los nueve tienen abierto su Facebook. Entonces creo que tiene ventajas y desventajas, y no solamente Nicaragua, sino en toda Latina América. ¿Que está pasando con todas estas tecnologías? Está pasando algo que no podemos dejar a un lado, que es la desintegración familiar.

¹⁴⁵ Original in Spanish: Los valores.

¹⁴⁶ As a personal note, in comparison to Finland the amount of violence shown to children is excessive in Nicaragua. Nicaraguan children and youngsters very often consume the same tv programs and movies as their parents and this is often seen normal and goes unquestioned. When I did not want to take my 4-year-old to a horror movie rated not suitable for children under 16 in Finland, my friends were a little confused since they were going with four children aged 2, 3, 9 and 13.

looks like Daniel will win, I'll see you in the mountains, and he's crying, and he's a Sandinista. So the media manipulates the information and leaves a lot to be desired.¹⁴⁷

The mountains in Nicaragua is a strong symbolic expression still used in everyday speech even by younger Nicaraguans. When someone says in this context "I'll see you in the mountains" it means that the person believes there is going to be another war, and the fighters will take to the mountains of northern Nicaragua as they did before the revolution and during the contra war. The comment of the student underlines several interesting themes. First, how people from different social locations see the information available. As discussed in the previous chapter, many students who did not belong to the UNEN or Juventud Sandinista felt that young people are manipulated by wrong information and not enough critical information is available. They felt that criticism should especially be pointed at the FSLN. On the other hand, as shown here, from the point of view of a student who belongs to the party or supports it, all this type of critical information towards the party is the wrong kind of information.

Independent of their political affiliations, most of the students I interviewed felt that what was lacking was diversity of communication. As another student commented on the theme:

We should also remember that society is many-sided. What is good for one social group is bad for another social group and vice versa. We cannot have only one line of communication, thinking that everyone is going to accept it. Also, I have positive point of polarity that maintains a dual system, a social balance. For the good to exist the bad also needs to exist. It creates a social balance, because if not, what do we have, a utopia? That can't be. So it's an interesting question. So the means of communication end up being an institution as well.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ *Male D, Group 2*. Original in Spanish: Quiero retomar el tema de medios de comunicación y cambio social, porque el problema cuando hablando de las redes sociales, internet, Facebook, ese tipo de cosa, pues eso tipo de cosa no llegan necesariamente a poblador de una comarca, no necesariamente llegan quien tiene la necesidad...y digo eso porque los medios de comunicación en Nicaragua dejan mucho que desear, el periodismo televisivo, radial y periodístico. Nicaragua históricamente sabemos que ha sido un país polarizado, y hay algunas cosas que dejan mucho que desear. Entonces al ciudadano que este en una comarca que escucha tal vez una radio y le dicen va haber guerra. ¿Como se da cuenta que no va haber guerra si único que le llega es un radio que manipula? Les doy un ejemplo de lo que me paso cuando yo estaba para las elecciones del comandante Ortega el 2006. Me dice el compañero casi llorando, mira se parece que gana Daniel, nos vemos en la montaña, y llorando, y es sandinista. Entonces esos medios de comunicación manipulan la información y creo que hay mucho que desear.

¹⁴⁸ *Male A, Group 2*. Original in Spanish: Acordemos también de que la sociedad esa substancial. Lo que es bueno para un grupo social es malo para un otro grupo social y viceversa. Tampoco puedes tener una sola línea de comunicación sabiendo que todo el mundo la va a aceptar. Incluso, estoy notando un punto positivo de la polaridad, que también mantiene un sistema dual, un balance social, para que existan los buenos tienen que existir los malos, crea un balance social, porque si no, que vamos a tener, una utopía? No puede ser. Entonces es una cuestión bastante interesante también. Entonces la comunicación termina ser una institución también.

Another important point, apart from the political, is the availability of information. It is true what one Group 2 student said: many rural districts in Nicaragua still rely on the limited communication of local radios. Many students I discussed with brought up questions about the reliability of information in local newspapers and on local TV channels. This is not a phenomenon that is only seen in Nicaragua: according to the statistics of the Latinobarómetro Report of 2016, the majority of Latin Americans believe that the media is “influenced by the powerful.” The numbers do not show a significant change over the last few years, since the percentage of people who hold this view has fluctuated from 63% in 2004 to 65% in 2016 (Latinobarómetro 2016: 41). Natanson (2014: 50-60) states that the Latin American media is going through both a global crisis as the velocity of information and the way information is consumed changes, and a local ideological crisis as many of the leftist governments of the region intend to regulate the media. The students I interviewed criticized both the lack of freedom of the press as well as the content produced, as one of them commented:

I don't understand how that kind of information works in our heads. I don't understand. But...the producers and directors of TV are insisting of doing programs that get more stupid every day, that degrading human integrity, and I don't know what that does to our heads. That's what frightens me.¹⁴⁹

Due to the unreliability of traditional media, many of the students who participated in this study had turned to other sources of information, as one of them explained:

I have already stopped using traditional media. I inform myself more by the Internet; I search more [information] from the international channels. And I search from many, and even though the same thing goes on in the national channels, at least I can have that balance easier.¹⁵⁰

The negative image of the media and the lack of freedom of the press can also affect the way people see freedom of speech in general. Many of the survey respondents felt there are problems with freedom of speech in Nicaragua; 61% stated that the lack of freedom of speech in their country was a problem or a serious problem. This in my opinion reflects both the previously discussed situation within Nicaraguan universities as well as the problems with the freedom of the press and the reining in of peaceful

¹⁴⁹ *Male H1, born 1986-1992*. Original in Spanish: Yo no entiendo cómo trabaja ese tipo de información en la cabeza de nosotros. No entiendo. Pero...están empecinando los productores y directores de televisión en hacer programas cada día más tontos, degradantes para la integridad humana, y yo no sé cómo es eso en nuestra cabeza, eso es lo que me da miedo.

¹⁵⁰ *Male E, Group 2*. Original in Spanish: Yo ya he dejado de ver esos medios tradicionales. Yo me formo más por el internet, estoy buscando más de canales internacionales. Y busco de varias, y aunque lo mismo sucede en las canales nacionales pero por lo menos puedo tener ese balance mucho más fácil.

demonstrations by the police, as described by some of the interview participants. In some cases, media can also portray and stereotype young people in negative terms leading the young to link the media to spaces that reproduce a disregarded version of their history and stereotyped views of their status as young, as Muñoz-Navarro (2009: 43-60) has shown to happen in Chile. Peetz (2008: 6-25) has analyzed media discourses of youth violence in Nicaragua, Costa Rica and El Salvador. He has noted that the media discourse regarding youth gangs and violence has produced significant effects on the way in which youth violence is discursively treated in other parts of the system. This, however, was not evident in my material. The students discussed the role of media more actively than I had anticipated, but the focus was not on how media portrays young people, but on the content produced and on the freedom of the press.

Access to the Internet as well as the ability to filter and evaluate information provided by different types of media is closely linked to one's capacity to function in today's society. Hoff (2006: 83-92) argues that competence in using information technology represents a new form of capital, which he refers to as 'virtual capital.' Pénard and Poussing (2010: 569-595) suggest that the Internet plays a vital role in the formation of social capital. In the case of Nicaragua, access to Internet services, and the knowledge of how to use social media are also indicators of local inequalities. In the light of my material, social capital is also increasingly created in virtual space. As shown in Table 5, 80.35% of the survey respondents use social media on a daily or weekly basis. It is important to note that all the participants of this study are students who have access to the Internet at the university, and consequently can use many Internet-based services irrespective of their economic situation. Most Nicaraguans use the Internet from *kioscos* (kiosks) that offer Internet service per hour or from their phones with a relatively pricy and slow prepaid connection. Thus, the responses to this question would most likely be very different if the respondents were not students.

Where social media is concerned, my material clearly shows two things. First, as presented in Figure 5, almost all the survey respondents used social media at least monthly, and most weekly or daily, as did the interview participants. Second, as presented in Figure 6, when the survey participants were asked if they use the Internet to take part in conversations or virtual demonstrations online, to express their opinion or comment on something in social media, blogs or other forums, almost 34% stated that they never do. This was also the case with many interview participants. They told me they used social media mainly to interact with their own friends or communicate with relatives living abroad, and the Internet

was mainly used for study-related information. Scherman et al. (2015: 17) conclude in their study of student demonstrations and marches against the construction of a power plant in Patagonia that there was a positive relationship between the use of both Facebook and Twitter. They state that: “Controlling for ideology, political interest, social capital and traditional media, people with an active account in these online media are more likely to protest” (2015: 17). In the light of my material, I argue that social media in Nicaragua does not hold such an influence when it comes to societal or political mobilization. One reason behind this may be the limited economic means that do not allow people to use Internet-based services on a daily basis. I maintain, however, that the creation of social capital in virtual space should be taken into account in future studies.

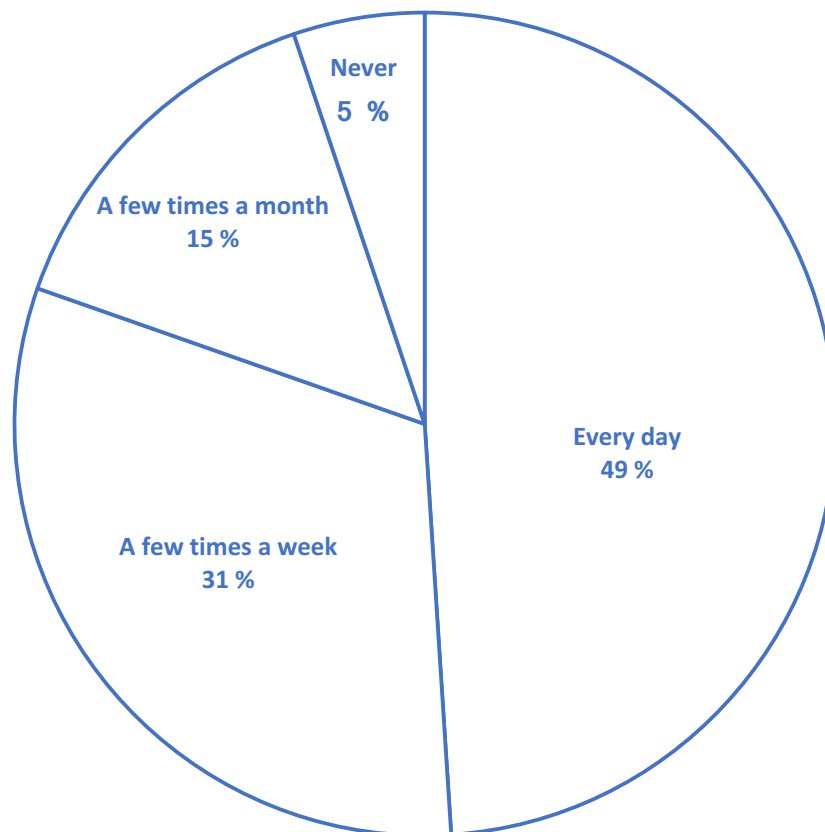


Figure 5. Survey responses: Do you use social media and how often?

Number of responses: 291

The relationship between social media and different types of civic engagement and activism has been studied in several other countries as well.¹⁵¹ The involvement of young people on digital services and social media platforms is an interesting question that has provoked discussion as well as images that do not necessarily correspond with reality. Many scholars have used the concept of ‘digital generations’ (e.g. Buckingham and Willett 2013, Michael et al. 2012) or ‘digital natives’ (e.g. Palfrey and Gasser, 2011, Prensky 2001). The press in Finland often uses the term ‘digital native’ as well, referring to young people who have grown up with the modern technology. Such terms and the associations they produce are not without their problems, however. First, these kinds of generalizations assume that people born in a certain era automatically know how to navigate the new technologies. Second, they may make us believe everyone has access to these technologies, which is not in fact the case.

In the light of my material, the crossing point of global and local opportunities is very visible, especially when it comes to the Internet and social media. Even though media and communication platforms, such as social media and other Internet-based forums and services, can easily be seen as socially inclusive, this may not be the case everywhere. Not everyone has access to these services, or the knowledge and ability to use them. As Reguillo (2009: 23) points out, in Nicaragua over 50% of young people live in poverty. Since many have very limited economic means, access to services that are seen as part of everyday life in a richer country can be a rare luxury. Another question is the images provided for the young through global platforms. Appadurai (1990) has presented the term ‘mediascape,’ a cultural flow that blends fiction and reality and presents “large and complex repertoires of images, narratives and ethnoscares” (1990: 229). The experiences of receiving the images and narratives provided by mediascapes is connected to a range of factors, such as the historical, social, cultural, and ethnic location of social actors. These images and narratives also produce connections and communities but also separation, which Bourdieu (1984) describes using the term ‘distinction.’ Appadurai (1996: 54) states that biographies of ordinary people turn into constructions of imagination when “More people throughout the world see their lives through the prisms of the possible lives offered by the mass media in all their forms. That is, fantasy is now a social practice; it enters, in a host of ways, into the fabrication of social lives.” This was evident in my material as well: what the world can offer is presented on a gold plate to anyone who has access to an Internet kiosk, meanwhile underlining the fact that many of the opportunities offered are not available to everyone. Thus, as Rizvi (2005: 84) states, in

¹⁵¹ See e.g. Lim 2012 on social movements in Egypt, and Howard et al. 2011 on the role of social media during the Arab Spring.

today's world, class formation is produced and reproduced not only by local circumstances but also by global conditions of mobility.

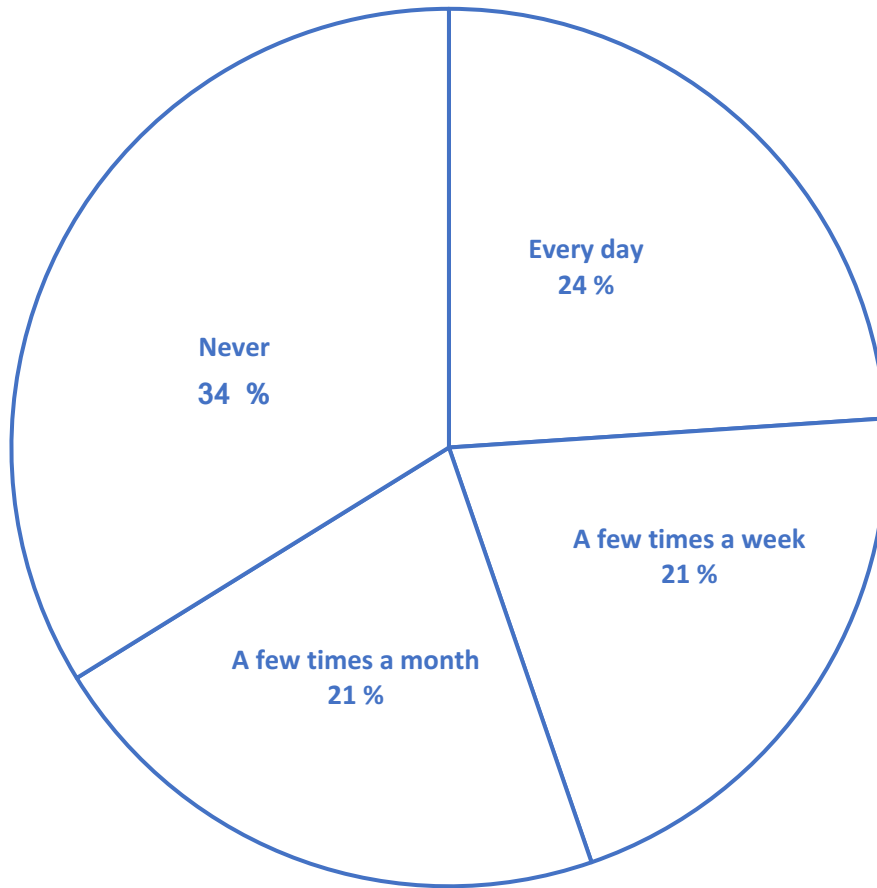


Figure 6. Survey responses: Do you use the Internet to take part in conversations or virtual demonstration online to express your opinions or comment on social media or blogs?

Number of responses: 285

On the other hand, the discussion on globalization, working abroad and opportunities available for students brought up a strong belief with some that everything is possible if you just have the right attitude. As one of the students commented:

Well globalization ... I asked myself as well if it is an opportunity for all or just for some. I consider it to be an opportunity for all, because it opens doors for everyone. The thing is that it has to do with our attitude, like how are we going to confront it. We are not only Nicaragua anymore we are the entire

world. If we wish to compete in the world we need to update ourselves, be conscious that we ourselves are one more product, we need to sell ourselves, we need to overcome everyone else, we need to be different.¹⁵²

One's attitude was often mentioned, as was the lack of opportunities. The few students who had considered moving abroad stated that one of the big reasons for doing this was the lack of opportunities they felt they had in Nicaragua. Some, on the other hand, felt no need to leave, even though everyone apart from the medical students agreed that employment opportunities in Nicaragua were quite scarce. This sparked my interest in mapping out how the students navigated uncertain situations, and to analyze what motivated them in situations of uncertainty. I turn to these questions in the next chapter.

¹⁵² *Male H4, born 1986-1992*. Original in Spanish: Bueno la globalización... igual me preguntaba si es una oportunidad para todos o unos pocos. Yo considero que es una oportunidad para todos, porque abre la puerta para todos. Lo que pasa es que tiene que ver también con la actitud, que como vamos a enfrentarlo. Ya no somos solo Nicaragua ahora somos todo el mundo. Si queremos competir en el mundo tenemos que actualizarnos nosotros mismos, ser conscientes que nosotros somos un producto más, tenemos que vender nos, tenemos que sobresalir todos lo demás, tenemos que ser diferentes.

9. *Becoming a Professional: Finding One's Place in Society*

*Soy rico
camino por las calles
dejando crecer mis poemas
mis cabellos
mi barba
que casi no me crece
Mis zapatos están gastados
mis ropas luyidas y nistas
y sin embargo
Soy alegre
Soy rico
Llevo conmigo las flores
mis bolsas están llenas
de poemas.¹⁵³*

Francisco Santos, Soy Rico

As discussed in the previous chapter, the lack of opportunities and the limited employment prospects concerned the students who participated in this study. The social integration of the young and the employment opportunities available to them are some of the pressing topics in the field of youth studies. In this chapter I discuss the labor market opportunities for young Nicaraguans, questions related to transitions from studies to work, and the ways in which Nicaraguan students make their studies meaningful in times of uncertainty. Some of the concepts used when discussing labor market integration or transitions to adulthood do not apply as such to Nicaraguan society, while in other cases the Nicaraguan students face similar obstacles and expectations as many of their peers in other parts of the globe. I argue that the school-to-work transition should not be underestimated, since it remains an important change in the lives of the young; studying and being a student involve much more than just

¹⁵³ I am rich, I walk the streets letting my poems grow, my hair, my beard, which almost does not grow. My shoes are worn out, my clothes ragged and in tatters, and without a doubt, I am happy, I am rich. I carry flowers with me, my pockets are full of poems.

the hope of labor market integration or the desire for economic independence. As we shall see, my results show that even though education does not guarantee labor market integration or a steady salary, it is valued, since education itself has become a value. Being a student produces cultural and social capital, while studying, becoming a professional as the students express it, is a rite of transition to a new position within society and within the family.

Transitions and Semi-dependencies – Studies, Work, and In Between

When one begins studies at the university the idea is usually to be able to work later in life with something related to one's field of studies. Most of the participants in this study, apart from the medical students, were concerned about their future work opportunities. Even though many scholars have criticized the focus on school-to-work transitions, and I myself discuss transitions in a much broader sense in this study than just the labor market integration of the young, it is important to note that whether we like it or not the reality is that most young people do go through a transition from school to work, or in some cases unemployment. Despite the intent to avoid linear approaches to life course and youth, the connection of studies and labor market integration is something that exists and is extremely important for many young people, and thus cannot be ignored. As shown in Figure 7, 92% of the survey participants in this study found unemployment either an important or a very important national issue. There was no difference in the answers regarding whether the university was public or private, or the phase of studies. The topic was also mentioned in all the personal interviews.

Over the last few decades, the academic discussion about young people and labor market integration has used such concepts as risk society (Beck 1992, Giddens 1990), yo-yo transitions and semi-dependencies. Even though during the last few years the sole focus on linear school-to-work transitions has with good reason been contested, and the risk of negative connotations related to the use of terms such as prolonged transitions has been recognized by many scholars, the conversation on these concepts is important for the purposes of this study, since they have molded the way in which the academic field of youth studies has reproduced the image of youth. The term 'semi-dependency' is used in youth studies as a socio-economic concept to refer to prolonged, fragmented, and sometimes also reversible youth transitions. It can relate, for example, to situations where young people cope with the uncertainty of occupational choices or to periods of financial dependency on their parents. Both are often seen as

factors that can cause difficulties in finding one's place as a fully recognized adult member of society (e.g. Ahier and Moore 1999, Biggart and Walther 2006, Du Bois-Reymond and López Blasco 2003, Furstenberg 2010, Sharma et al. 2010). These situations are often seen as the results of changes in the labor market, longer periods spent in education, and pluralization and individualization of lifestyles. Since young people transition back and forth between dependency and independence, the former often assimilated directly with youth and the latter with adulthood, like a toy yo-yo, many scholars have used the term 'yo-yo transitions' to describe these changes (e.g. Biggart and Walther 2006, Du Bois-Reymond and López Blasco 2003, EGRIS 2001, País 2003, Walther 2006).

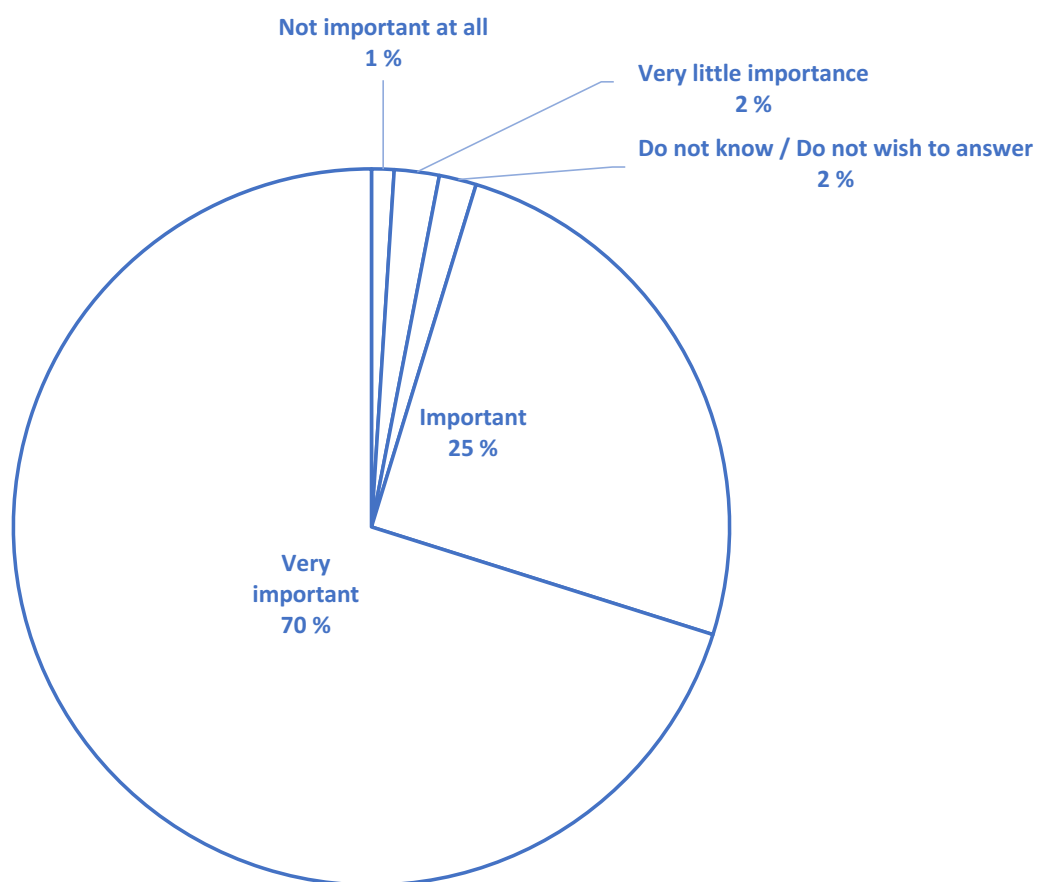


Figure 7. Survey responses: How important to you is the current unemployment situation in the country?

Number of responses: 299

In an article based on a European research project, named Yo-Yo, Stauber (2007: 37) states that in late modern societies choice represents a meta-principle of self-determination and participation. Although Stauber makes this point in a European context, the significance of personal choice was also evident in my material, especially when it came to being able to choose study paths or work. 98.4% of the survey respondents stated that it was important or very important for them to be able to study the career they themselves had chosen, and 97% stated that it was important or very important for them to be able to work with something that interests them. The value of personal choice was also clear when it came to choosing one's course of study, as 98.4% of the respondents declared it was important or very important for them to be able to study the subject they themselves chose. However, when asked if they found it important to work in any job whatsoever as long as they could provide for themselves, the responses were more divided. As shown in Figure 8, about half of the students stated that they found it important to provide for themselves no matter what the job, and the rest were divided between not knowing or feeling it would not be important for them. When I discussed career choices with the interview participants, the reasons behind their career choices varied from individual choice or interest to family traditions and economic reasons.

Concerning questions of money and providing for oneself, the economic situation of the country, and the conflicts it creates were quite evident in my material. Money was something many interview participants did not comment on directly; instead many students mentioned that they wished to provide for themselves but underlined that their goal was not necessarily to get rich. However, when the survey respondents were asked how important it was to make a lot of money, 85.9% of them said it was important or very important. These responses reflect the socio-cultural history of the country: Nicaragua is a poor country, where many of the people who have become rich have done so by political games, which are often seen as illegal. According to Transparency International (2016), Nicaragua is the third most corrupt country in Latin America, and corruption has also played a role in both politics and public services. Having money is clearly a necessity in Nicaraguan society, since corruption means that someone has to be bribed to get even the basic public services, but at the same time rich people are often seen as corrupt.

Hence, many Nicaraguans are proud of making an honest living, albeit a modest one, and money in general is not often discussed. On the other hand, when a member of a poor household begins studies at the university level, graduating often comes with the expectation of making at least enough money to

help the family out. Most of the interview participants expressed the wish to earn a salary with which they can both provide for themselves and also help their family. Even though almost all the students who participated in this study wished to be able to choose for themselves, their choices are very much restricted by the structural obstacles of the society they live in. Thus, the pathways that students take when navigating their way toward a life after studies are constructed in accordance with both their individual choices and values, such as family or one's career wishes, and the structures of Nicaraguan society. This obviously creates a conflict between hopes and reality, especially in fields of study where future job opportunities are very limited.

As already discussed, the social realities the students encounter are a product of both global and local changes. When it comes to the labor market, the opportunities available for the young are also affected by the process of restructuring labor societies. These processes have not been similar in Latin America or, for example, in Europe. It is also important to note that I am discussing specifically the situation of university students; a very specific school-to-work transition of a group that already possess more social and cultural capital due to their studies than many of their peers. It should also be kept in mind that the transition from studies to work does not occur at some specific age throughout Latin America, but varies from a very early age to older age depending on the region, on socio-economic status, and on many other factors. In general, urban young people tend to study for longer periods of time while their rural counterparts start working full time at an earlier age (Cunningham 2008: 83-85). However, this in my opinion is one of the reasons for focusing on the transition from university life to the labor market. There is in fact very little information or studies available on the labor market integration of university-level students in Nicaragua, or in Latin America in general. Since most studies focus on youth considered to be at risk, such as gang members (Cunningham 2008: 83-85), or the claimed unwillingness of the young people to engage in the labor market (see e.g. Córdón 2011: 3-18), young people with academic education tend to be overlooked, and it is automatically assumed that they are doing well since they are receiving or have received an education. Yet, as one of the interviewees stated:

There are a lot of people out there on the streets with an academic degree. Last week my taxi driver turned out to be a guy with a bachelor's degree. He could not find any other work. He was frustrated and it got me worried about my own future, like ... I ask myself, did I do all this for nothing?¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ *Male H, born 1986-1992.* Original in Spanish: Hay mucha gente allí en la calle con un título. La otra semana el conductor de taxi resulto ser un muchacho con un licenciado. Pero no encontró ningún otro empleo. Se sintió frustrado y me empezó a preocupar mi propio futuro, como ... ¿me pregunto si hice todo esto en vano?

Since the 1980s many Latin American countries have implemented programs that have aimed to remove obstacles that prevented young people from entering the labor market. Many of these programs sought in particular to integrate young people with little formal education and socio-economic difficulties (Jacinto 2008: 123-142). As stated before, youth studies as an academic field have generally centered on North America, Europe and Australia, and most of the studies conducted on school-to-work transitions and the concepts created, such as yo-yo transitions, have been based on societies in these countries. Thus, we cannot assume that the processes evident in European, North American or Australian societies would also apply to Latin America, and the research on youth employment in Latin America remains scarce.¹⁵⁵

Nayak (2003: 4) notes that many scholars have shown how the uneven aspects of global processes and global networks of capital produce and reproduce inequalities, and how these reproduced inequalities have damaging effects upon youth transitions into local labor markets even in far-removed communities. This is very evident comparing my material to the studies done in Europe. The same global processes that may result in young Europeans yo-yoing between employment and underemployment, or possibly searching for new ways of working, may lead to young people in a less developed area being without work altogether or might force them to immigrate to another country. On the other hand, based on my material, many of the students I interviewed who came from rural areas felt they had a safety net to fall back on if they could not find employment after graduation: going back home to work on the family farm was an option for many, and even a goal for some. Due to the different development process, this is not an option for many young Europeans.

Despite the option of going back home to the countryside, everyone I interviewed wished to work primarily in the field they had studied. Many recognized that whether this was possible or not depended both on the economic situation of the country and on the field of study they had chosen. The whole of Latin America has gone through complex social and economic changes in urbanization. Some of the structural characteristics of the region include decentralization of the state, high income inequality, very low systemic competitiveness and productivity, and high productive heterogeneity. In many other countries in the region, income segmentation and discrimination combined with significant wage gaps between different educational levels has resulted in high levels of income concentration

¹⁵⁵ Most of the recent studies on youth employment focus on Argentina (see e.g. Pérez 2013, Salvia 2013, Salvia and Tuñón 2005, Saraví 2006). Youth employment in Nicaragua is mentioned almost solely in studies discussing Central American youth gangs.

(Maurizio 2013), which is also the case in Nicaragua. As Jacinto (2008: 128) notes, despite the new programs aimed at the poorest families, initiated in 2004, and better access to communication and education, reality and expectations rarely meet.

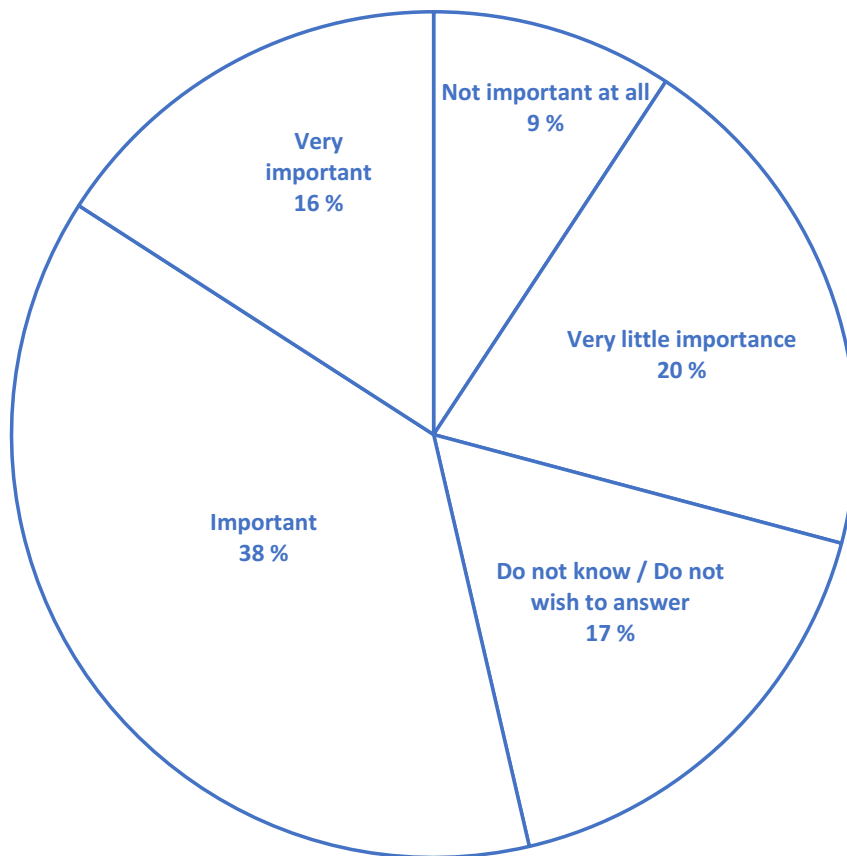


Figure 8. Survey Responses: How important is it for you to work in any kind of job as long as you can support yourself by means of this job?

Number of responses: 302

The clash of expectations and reality is tied to the fact that despite all the global changes and individualization Nicaragua is still very much a class society where social structures affect people from diverse backgrounds, and with different amounts of capital, in very different ways. As mentioned before, some scholars have argued that class is no longer as relevant as it used to be. Based on my material, I disagree with this. As Furlong and Cartmel (2007: 5) put it: “Diversification involves the

emergence of new experiences and trajectories, but does not involve a process of equalization nor does it dilute the nature of class-based inequalities on an objective level.” The students who participated in this study live in a society where personal ties and networks play a major role in all public functions. As Álvarez Montalván (2008: 88-89) points out, Nicaragua is dominated by services that are largely based on personal relations and favor, even in public administration, ministries, banks and other services. Thus, where theorizing youth is concerned, we need to be careful when making statements about class and individual choice.

My material showed clearly the clash of hopes, dreams and expectations and the local reality. Social segmentation is a relevant factor when discussing the opportunities that young people have. In Nicaragua, the structural obstacles such as the ones mentioned above are combined with the opportunity structures defined by local political conditions that affect all aspects of students’ lives. Some of these structural factors can be overcome by resources; by the capital available to one. In general, those with economic capital do not need to worry that much about their future employment opportunities. However, since most of the participants in my study had relatively limited economic capital available to them, the importance of social and cultural capital is especially highlighted. As I participated in the students’ leisure-time activities and the student events organized at the universities, I had an opportunity to observe the networks the students had created and to discuss matters with the students. Many mentioned that their peer groups and the activities they took part in with their peers were important to them, most of all as a supportive network. The participants in Group 1, for example, described their peer group in this way:

Female 1, Group 1	We are one big family. ¹⁵⁶
Male 1, Group 1	Yes we are very united ... always ... ¹⁵⁷
Female 1, Group 1	Yes, we are a very united group, supportive of each other. ¹⁵⁸

Social networks acquired through studies and political or organizational affiliation, and cultural capital, such as the ability to use the appropriate kind of language and the skills needed to navigate civic engagement opportunities, are useful in overcoming some of the structural obstacles that students face

¹⁵⁶ Original in Spanish: Somos una gran familia.

¹⁵⁷ Original in Spanish: Si somos muy unidos...siempre..

¹⁵⁸ Original in Spanish: Si, somos un grupo muy unido, apoyando entre nosotros.

when transitioning from their studies to the labor market. Many students told me how learning the correct ways of speaking opens doors to networks at the university that can later turn into work opportunities. On the other hand, the ability to navigate the structural obstacles of society is greatly affected by individual choice. I have spoken with several students who recognized that joining political organizations connected to the FSLN would be beneficial for them career wise. But despite this many have chosen not to do so, since it would have been against their own personal values. Thus, the students navigate within the opportunities available to them, the structures of the society, and their own personal values and beliefs. However, it is important to note that the possession of valid capital is not all that determines one's position in society. Positioning oneself within the fields involves individual decisions within the frameworks of society and the capital available. The decision to act within the rules of a particular field also creates social distances. When the students identify themselves with a certain social group they also distance themselves from other groups. Entering a field that produces useful social capital in the form of new networks, such as the students' organizations for example, may distance them from other significant positions, and some of the students pointed out that sometimes their expectations and reality did not match.

The role and influence of the student organization UNEN creates an interesting situation in the field of education in Nicaragua that also affects labor market transitions and students' expectations. André and Hilgers (2015: 121-139) have studied collective agents in schools and have noted that the field of education holds different kinds of positions for educational institutions. Following Bourdieu's theory of fields, these positions are linked to the overall social space and defined by the capital of the institution, the volume of economic capital, meaning material resources, as well as cultural capital. André and Hilgers (2015: 124) give the school population and institutional culture as examples of this cultural capital. Thus, choosing a school with a high position and volume of capital would seem to be a straightforward way of securing one's future position in society. Obviously, due to their economic situation, for most Nicaraguan students this is not a question of simply choosing, but rather a question of what is within their reach. Yet, for those who can choose, the reality of the choice made can be other than expected. As one of the students¹⁵⁹ who took part in the survey of this study concluded when I met him after he had graduated:

¹⁵⁹ The student took part in this study in 2012. By chance I met him again in 2014. He had graduated and wished to share his experiences of finding a job with me. He gave me his consent to use our conversation in this study.

I have been applying all over, and nothing. And it's like ... I graduated from UCA, the best in the country. I speak four languages. I did the internships. But all the positions are for members of the ruling party ... and I ask myself like ... what more can they want? But I didn't take part in those things [party politics] when I studied so it is a no-go. I'm applying to a project in Guatemala now.¹⁶⁰

In the light of this, one could interpret that young Nicaraguans are going through the same kind of long transitional periods of semi-dependency as Stauber (2007: 31-47), among others, has reported. Walther (2006: 121) states that in Europe:

Owing to the prolongation of passages from school to work, transitions in other life strands – family, housing, partnership, lifestyle and so on – are also increasingly revealed to have followed different logics and rhythms rather than being automatic consequences of labor market entrance. Youth transitions have hence become fragmented, and situations of youth-like dependency and adult autonomy may co-exist simultaneously within the same biography.

The cultural context in Nicaragua and many other Latin American countries is very different, however, and thus requires further scrutiny. Moving away from the parents' home when beginning university studies is a common transition, for example, in Europe or the United States. Coles (2005: 8) has suggested that to be seen as adults in the society young people make interrelated transitions that include a school-to-work transition, a domestic transition, and a housing transition. Arnett (2004), on the other hand, sees adulthood as linked to financial independence and making independent decisions. In general, most youth studies scholars consider the inability of moving out from the parents' home a difficulty or even an interruption in one's life course. In my opinion, one of the reasons why the notion of life course has faced criticism is due to the way many scholars have discussed transitions from school to work in terms of interruptions and negative changes that interrupt the linear progress of an individual's life course. Thus, it is important to keep in mind that a life course is not a linear process, but is fluid and flexible.

¹⁶⁰ *Male, born 1986-1988*. Original in Spanish: He mandado a todos lados y nada. Y es como ... yo me gradué de UCA, lo mejor del país. Hablo cinco idiomas. Hice las practicas. Pero todas las posiciones son partidarios ... I me pregunto cómo... que más pueden querer? Pero yo no participe en esa cosa estudiando así que es un no-go. Estoy aplicando para un proyecto en Guatemala.

I wish to contest the negative images associated with housing and semi-dependency and point out that they are also a cultural construct. In Nicaragua, moving out of the family home when starting university-level studies, or even after graduation, is not common. Most young people stay in the childhood family home during their entire study course and even after finding a permanent job. Children are often even expected to live with their parents or at a relative's house up until the time they get married and start a family of their own. In the rural areas, it is common for several generations to live in the same household, and many young people who do move out of their parents' house at an early age due to studies or work aim to move to a relative's house instead of finding housing of their own. In some cases, the reasons behind this are economic, but in most cases cultural. The family is valued and young people prefer to share a household with their parents rather than living alone, and this by no means considered a difficulty or a failure.

Thus, the co-existence of youth-like dependency and adult autonomy that Walther (2006: 119-139) among others describes as a problem in Europe is a very normal part of life in Nicaragua. My aim is not to claim that these problems are not real; they are very real for example for young people living in societies where the cultural norms expect them to move out at a certain age. Yet, in the light of this, I argue that one of the pressing topics in the field of youth studies is to encourage more discussion on the question of how we define adulthood, and what is included in the idea of an adult position in society today. As Blatterer (2007: 1-11) points out, social and biological age are developed and measured against adulthood as a central category. Yet the debate on what is included in this category in different societies remains relatively scarce. Also, since youth is a social category constructed within different cultural contexts and social expectations, what is regarded as a transition toward adulthood varies depending on the time and the place (Heinz 2009: 3-13).

As discussed here, in Nicaragua, as in many other countries in the world, education no longer guarantees social integration via labor market integration, and many students face situations of uncertain duration in which they try to develop their 'own lives' under conditions of uncertainty. Even though Nicaraguan society differs from many European countries when it comes to family unity and housing solutions, finding steady employment was important to all the students who participated in this study. Most of the participants in this study also recognized, and were directly influenced by, the uncertain labor market situation. As one of them described it:

We all have dreams of getting out of the university like I'm going to earn a lot of money and find myself a job. But the reality is otherwise. The reality is you go out into the world and you don't know what to do. You send applications everywhere, no one responds, it's a critical situation.¹⁶¹

Many students felt that the expectations that potential employers had did not correspond with reality. They felt that to find a job in the field they had studied, they would have to have had a lot of work experience, and still preferably be as young as possible, and have graduated as soon as possible. The anxiety of finding a job after graduation was raised both in the individual interviews and in the group discussions, particularly with Group 2, which was formed of students from several disciplines. As stated before, it seems that medical students, like those in Group 1, felt more secure about their future as their study route already included practice periods and concrete work assignments in local hospitals and communities. The students in Group 2 felt that in most cases one would have to have had more experience and specialization than is actually possible at that age. One of the students felt that employees systematically asked for more experience than one could possibly have at that age:

It's like that here too. You go for a job interview and they ask for work experience. And apart from that there are other types of jobs that are more specialized and they also ask you to show your experience there. They have a systematic tendency to do that.¹⁶²

His fellow students had pondered about this matter on the global level too. As he commented: "The problem we have on the global level is that often students get their degree but they don't have the work experience that is asked for."¹⁶³

The worries that the students expressed are very common. From my personal experience, the difficulties of meeting the work experience requirements of possible future employers after graduation, is something many students in Finland are concerned about as well. Apart from being a source of anxiety, the question of work experience and age has sparked humorous comments and memes that have been going around the Internet, not only in Nicaragua but in other countries as well. This tells us of the

¹⁶¹ *Male H3, born 1986-1992*. Original in Spanish: Todos tenemos sueños de salir de la universidad como que voy a ganar bien y voy a salir y encontrar un trabajo. Pero la realidad es otra, la realidad es que salís al mundo y no sabes que hacer. Metes papeles por todos lados, nadie te llama, es crítico.

¹⁶² *Male A, Group 2*. Original in Spanish: Igual aquí, te vas a un trabajo y te piden experiencia laboral. Y aparte de eso que hay otros trabajos que son más especializados que te piden también que muestres tu alta especialización, tienen un marco bastante sistemático en ese sentido.

¹⁶³ *Male C, Group 2*. Original in Spanish: La problemática que tenemos en nivel mundial es que muchas veces los estudiantes obtienen sus títulos pero no obtenemos la experiencia laboral que piden de nosotros.

widespread nature of the phenomenon. One of the pictures that has gone viral on social media is given in Picture 8. The caption is: “When they ask you for 10 years’ work experience before you’re 22.” Several of my Latin American friends have shared this and other similar pictures on their social media accounts. This picture was sent to me by a Nicaraguan friend of mine who had recently graduated, and was told at several interviews for trainee positions that even for a trainee position the company expected at least 5 years’ work experience. This kind of experience for a 23-year-old was obviously an impossible demand.



Picture 8. Social media meme: When they ask you for 10 years’ work experience before you’re 22.¹⁶⁴

Heinz (2009: 3) argues that the cultural expectations the young face are very contradictory when it comes to transitions from school to work: “perform your transitions and pathway choices according to market opportunities and institutional rules and do this according to your individual, self-determined timing.” This impossibility is something that many of the Nicaraguan students faced as well. As I spent time with the students and discussed with them it became clear that many felt anxiety about time, or more precisely the feeling that things do not advance in the time frame they would wish them to

¹⁶⁴ The picture is taken from my personal Facebook account after my Nicaraguan friend shared it in 2013. It was not possible to verify who originally created this meme, but it has been on circulation on both Facebook and Instagram by thousands of people.

advance in. Many felt anxiety about having to fight against time to gain the experience required as quickly as possible. Opportunity, or the lack of it, and the passing of time, often appeared in the material. Dalgård (2014) discusses the same themes in the results of her study among young people in northeast Brazil: waiting for opportunities; the disappointment of not having reached the position one wanted in life; and social and geographical restrictions. Projections of one's future create temporal experiences, results of cognition that construct our identities as well as shape our views of the world and society around us. As Dalgård (2014: 98) puts it: "Personal, group, or national identities involve projections of the future in terms of both projects that current predicaments and joys instigate and the light that expected futures cast on the present."

When I discussed the future with the students, most of them were willing to work long and hard for their goals. And, as one of the young people Dalgård (2014: 98) interviewed in northeastern Brazil also put it, they were willing to accept that they must take the longer road to reach their goals. Most of the students I interviewed were making small but constant efforts to move forward and many were willing to work without salary just to gain experience. The responses also showcased the political difficulties and opportunity structures of the country. Many students told me that the local governments' offices were one of the few places where they could apply for an internship, since they did not require as much previous experience as the private sector. However, local government positions are often very tied to party membership and tended to renew their entire staff when there was a change of mayor. One of the interview participants who lived in the countryside described his intent to gain the required work experience as follows:

I'm going to tell you my own case. I studied rural industry, rural development. When I left the university in 2007, the agricultural [university], I went to my village and I was there, like, what shall I do I asked myself. I was going to study at UCA but I left in May and to go to UCA you had to apply in January, so I had six months when I was not doing anything. In my village, there is this organization ... so I arrived and said I had studied on the Bachelor's degree program for rural development and wanted to see if I could have a chance of working there, to gain more experience and then they refused, no, they said. Why? I said. Because, we may have a project in an outpost [they said]. No problem, I have my motorcycle [I said]. No, it's that we cannot give you money for the services of the motorcycle [they said]. And I said that doesn't matter. I wish to gain experience. Then they said that it is just one project ... then I understood that they were not giving me the opportunity because there is a lot of ... in my village there is a lot of ... how do I explain ... they take ownership of the positions, they are from Germany, but the one who is the manager, maybe he has a lot of knowledge of that, but it's not his branch, it's my branch. There's no opportunity. In

the city governments, yes maybe, but the local government offices are not stable, they are like for three years, and without knowing whether you are going to stay or not, so it's rather unstable. In the private companies, they want all the papers; the experiences as we discussed ... it would be great if they would give us a chance to work without salary.¹⁶⁵

Thus, in Nicaragua political affiliations are among the other factors that affect the students' transitions. Furlong and Cartmel (2007: 48-50) specify three different ways researchers, sociologists in particular, have conceptualized the transition from school to work: during the 1960s and 1970s social class and gender were seen as major predictors of school experience, and through school experience these factors were seen to determine the position of young people in the labor market. In the 1980s social changes complicated labor market transitions and young people leaving school at an early age did not find employment as quickly as before. Many sociologists, however, considered that the transitional outcomes were the result of structures. In the 1990s Beck and Giddens' theoretical influence moved the emphasis of many youth studies scholars to individual agents and the negotiation of risk. Furlong and Evans (1997) refer to these models as navigation models. Despite the framework used, the stories of the students I interviewed clearly highlight how important future work opportunities are for students. Thus, I believe questions about school-to-work transitions still have a great deal of value in the field of youth studies. These transitions are not always linear: a young person may have to stop studying for economic reasons and continue later, and many complex situations concerning the global economy and the individual life course affect the way people work and educate themselves during their life course. But although the transitions from school to work remain an important life event, taking into account the importance of school-to-work transitions does not have to exclude other points of view.

The world has evolved into an even more complex web of interactions during the 21st century. Moreover, the evident interconnectedness of the globe sometimes fools us into overlooking the

¹⁶⁵ *Male H9, born 1986-1992*. Original in Spanish: Te voy a poner un caso mío propio. Yo estudie la carrera industrial rural, desarrollo rural. Cuando yo me retiré de la universidad en el 2007, de la agraria, yo me fui a mi pueblo y yo allá que hago decía yo. Iba a estudiar en la UCA pues, pero yo me salí como el mayo y en la UCA tenía que iniciar el enero entonces tuve seis meses en que no hacía nada. En mi pueblo hay una organización ... entonces yo llegué y dije yo tuve la carrera de licenciatura en desarrollo rural y quiero ver si me pueden dar chances de trabajar aquí o sea agarrar más experiencia y entonces me negaron, no, me dicen. ¿Por qué? digo yo. Es que tal vez tenemos un proyecto en una comunidad. No importa tengo mi moto. No, pero es que no tenemos dinero para darte los servicios de la moto. Y yo no importa, yo quiero agarrar experiencia. Entonces me dijeron que no es que solo es un proyecto...entonces entendí que no me daban la oportunidad como que hay mucho, en mi pueblo hay mucho ... como te digo ... se adueñan de los puestos, ellos son alemanes, pero el que esta de gerente tal vez él tiene mucho conocimiento en ese, pero no es en su rama, es mi rama prácticamente. No hay oportunidad. En las alcaldías si tal vez, pero las alcaldías no son algo estable, son unos tres años, y sin saber si vas a quedar no vas a quedar, o sea algo inestable. En empresas privadas quieren todo el papel, la experiencia como hablamos...sería bueno si nos dieran chances a trabajar sin gozo de salario.

importance of locality, even though as shown in this study, locality can be an important field to gain social capital and a source that strengthens one's sense of agency. Thus, emphasis should be placed on the cultural context and on areal differences, since the transitions the young people face are complex and are affected by both structure and agency. In the light of my material, both structural factors and individual choice play a role in the kind of positions that the students interviewed even saw as possible for themselves. Furlong and Cartmel (2007: 52) point out that:

Young people are forced to negotiate a complex maze of potential routes and tend to perceive outcomes as dependent upon their individual skills, even when the objective risks of failure are slim. In turn, the perception of risk can lead to subjective discomfort.

The different opportunity structures within which the young people make their decision, and the capital available to them vary across different societies. Since most of the students participating in this study were aware that graduating from the university did not guarantee steady employment or economic stability, and even those who were not worried about their own situation were aware of the difficulties others had faced, I wanted to find out what it is that motivates students to continue with their studies despite these uncertainties. Hence, I set out to analyze the ways in which students cope with the situations they encounter, and how they continue to maintain meaningful lives under uncertain conditions.

Four Ways of Making a Meaning

Human beings attach meaning to a variety of things and seek for meaning in multiple ways. What makes actions, events or concrete things meaningful for us is somewhat a mystery. Wanting to have meaning is basic to the human condition, but how meanings are created, and what is meaningful to whom is not easy to either explain or investigate. We live our lives in a variety of cultural contexts, and thus meaning making is a process that involves cultural context as well as a process of constructing experiences that can exist simultaneously in the 'real' world and in our imagination. Whether these experiences are 'real' or not is beside the point: what is crucial is trying to understand the ways in which human beings construct these possible worlds (Brockmeir 2009: 214-215). When discussing transitions, in this case specifically the transition from school to work, I argue that we must remember that this transition may contain far more significances than those we expect it to contain. As stated, whether these significances are based on practical reality or on hopes, dreams and the imagination is not of importance here, since whether 'real' or not they tell a story of the social world that surrounds us.

Since graduating from university does not guarantee a steady income in the future, the often-expected meaning and goal of a study path, I wished to look closer at the meanings attached to studies. I set out to see what it is that drives students to continue their studies with the aim of understanding the ways in which the students make their lives and especially their studies meaningful in conditions of uncertainty. Elder (1994: 5) notes that "Transitions are always embedded in trajectories that give them distinctive form and meaning." Trajectory as an expression holds the assumption of linearity that, as already stated, I wish to avoid. However, Elder's point is valid in the sense that transitions are subject to changing conditions and different options that the future holds. Thus, the meanings we attach to, for example, studies at the university relate both to our current circumstances as well as to the hopes we have for the future.

Most of the students that participated in this study face changing conditions and uncertain outcomes. Yet, how they made their study path meaningful varied. As I went through my interviews and field notes I started to notice patterns that arose from the material, and began to group the students based on the central themes that arose from the interviews themselves. I began by grouping the interview participants based on their answers to specific clusters of questions and themes that arose from my material. I have named the four groups the Hyperactives, the Critics, the Family Centered and the Go

with the Flows, according to the emphasis they placed on themes and questions on individual agency, changes, opportunity and choices, structures of the society and how they themselves described their beliefs, values and hopes. The themes that arose from my material are:

- A. Individuals' position in society: individuals' responsibility and activity in society / the responsibility of the state to provide for individuals
- B. Opinions about political change: identification with political and societal change / general contentment with the state of things
- C. Plans for the future: career / family / confidence that everything will resolve itself without a plan
- D. Values and society: traditional / emphasizing change / adaptive to changes but not advocating them
- E. Opportunities: actively seeking and creating opportunities / planning a future elsewhere / open to suggestions but not actively engaging in them themselves

Based on the responses on questions relating to these themes, I identified four groups and four different ways of facing uncertain situations, as presented in Figure 10. My intention was not to create a taxonomy of concrete coping mechanisms or value-belief systems, nor to judge what is 'right' or 'wrong' or 'subjective' or 'objective,' but to perceive how the students made meaning in their studies, and in their lives, since the two in my opinion are very much interconnected. I would like to point out that the groups presented here are not clear cut; many students could be seen as belonging to more than one group. However, there were some clear identifiable differences in my material on how the students reacted to uncertain situations.

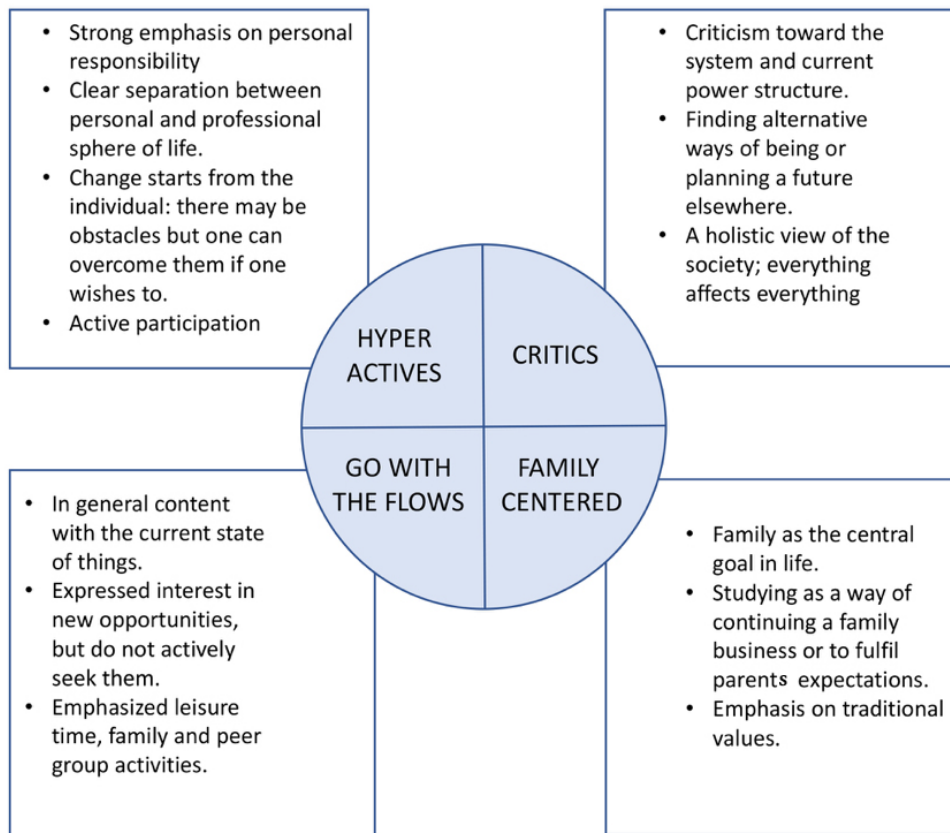


Figure 9. Description of the four identified groups: Hyperactives, Critics, Go with the Flows and Family Centered.

The Hyperactives believed strongly that everything depended on them, and if they worked hard enough everything was possible. They emphasized attitude and hard work, and were actively 'building' themselves to become the professionals they aspired to be. As discussed previously, youth studies scholars have pondered on the question of structure and agency, which is highlighted when discussing choice and a person's individual efforts. The concept of choice biographies, linked to Ulrich Beck's work, has been used to describe the changes that affect the move from youth to adulthood; biographies have tended to refer to a somewhat linear transition, as the concept of choice biographies aims to highlight the personally constructed nature of one's biography (Woodman 2009: 43). The concept has faced criticism for ignoring the structured nature of opportunities (see e.g. Brannen and Nielsen 2005, Evans 2007, Lehmann 2004), while Woodman (2009: 246), for example, argues that Beck is misrepresented in the debate by arguing that he overemphasizes agency and neglects structural constraints, and is used as "a caricature to claim a middle ground between structure and agency."¹⁶⁶

The structure/agency problematic remains central in youth studies and in my opinion new approaches and conversation are needed. Most of the current conversation tends to revolve around "the contemporary Western world," as Woodman (2009: 243) outlines. I find the Western world a complicated concept in this context: what is really said here is that non-linear biographies that are constructed by personal choice are a phenomenon found in Europe, North America and Australia. Yet, it is usually never defined what is included in this concept of the contemporary Western world, nor is it discussed how the changes discussed may possibly take place in a similar or in a completely different form in other societies as well.

As Heinz (2009: 7) points out, transitions occur in the context of social inequality, and not everyone has access to the most promising pathways. One could assume that personal choice and individuality would be embraced mostly by young people living in societies where the structures of society and the economic situation of both the society and the individual allow for more flexible and choice-based transitions. However, students who could be seen to belong to the Hyperactive group placed a strong emphasis on personal responsibility, despite the structural obstacles they identified in society. They strongly believed that change, chances and opportunities depend mostly on one's own choices. When it came to problems in society, the students recognized that there were certain problems and obstacles, but believed the best way to change conditions was to start with themselves. One of them stated:

¹⁶⁶ For more on the representation of Beck, see e.g. Roberts's (2010) response to Woodman.

“There are always opportunities, but to reach your goals you need to make a maximum effort. You need to work hard.”¹⁶⁷

Another explained his point of view as follows:

You need to fight for that study course, because you are going to notice that later on ... that with a title you are worth much more in our reality and our Nicaragua. But also from a social point of view, if you don't like it you transfer to another study course, but at the same time maybe it does not please your family, sometimes there is a conflict. But in the end one's focus is to finalize the study course, [get a] Bachelor's degree, get a title and be a valid member of society. You yourself should act as you have decided to ... and [that goes for] your behavior in the society as well.¹⁶⁸

The students in this group also made a clear separation between professional and personal spheres of life, and felt that their happiness depended mostly on themselves, and that they should not be affected by the opinions of others. As one of them put it:

In my 22 years, I can't complain about the way I am living, I feel happy, I feel content, maybe because thank God I have had better opportunities than some. And that goes for limitations too. But in this case, I think that yes, there are many limitations, but precisely my way of thinking is as follows: while you're young you're not allowed to rest, while you're young you have to fight, to go on, to seek something better and to change, to not repeat the history of many others. Each one must assert themselves, each one must succeed in what they want to be without having to adapt to others to be accepted. I will be accepted as I want to be and everyone else here will have to accept me as I want to be because I'm going to be happy. I'm not going to judge myself by a society by some ideals that I may not even share and be a repressed person.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ *Male H4, born 1986-1992*. Original in Spanish: Oportunidades siempre hay, pero para llegar a sobresalir tienes que hacer un esfuerzo máximo. Hay que trabajar duro.

¹⁶⁸ *Male C, Group 3*. Original in Spanish: Vos tenes que luchar por esa carrera, porque te va a dar cuenta más adelante que con un título vales mucho más en nuestra actualidad y en nuestra Nicaragua. Pero también del otro enfoque social, si no te gusta te trasladas a una otra carrera, pero a la misma vez al final tal vez a tu familia no le agrada, algunas veces hay un conflicto. Pero al final el enfoque de uno es sacar una carrera, una licenciatura, para tener un título y ser válido en la sociedad. Aun así muchas veces te presentas tu título no te hace valido en la sociedad. Sino vos mismo actúas como decides... y el comportamiento también que tenes en la sociedad.

¹⁶⁹ *Female A, Group 2*. Original in Spanish: En mis 22 años no puedo quejarme de lo que estoy viviendo, me siento feliz, me siento plena, quizás porque gracias a Dios he tenido mayores oportunidades que otros. Y con el aspecto de las limitantes es cierto... Pero en este caso yo pienso que si hay muchos limitantes, pero precisamente mi manera de pensar es la siguiente: mientras ser joven no está permitido descansar, mientras ser joven hay que luchar, hay que seguir, hay que buscar una mejoría y cambiar para no repetir la historia de muchos. Cada uno tiene que imponer, cada uno tiene que imponerse como quiere ser sin tener que adecuarse a otros para ser aceptado. Yo voy a ser aceptada como yo quiero ser y aquí me van a tener que aceptar los demás porque voy a ser feliz. No me voy a juzgar por una sociedad por ciertas ideales que quizás no comparto y voy a ser una persona reprimida.

Most of the students who belonged to this group were active in the UNEN or Juventud Sandinista. They also seemed to be the ones who were quick to observe the power relations and the benefits of specific social positions, and adapted to the rules required in the specific field.

However, there were other students who shared the same proactive attitude and the idea of change starting from one self, but had chosen a more critical approach. Thus, it seems that those who had the most proactive approach either took a decision to join the organizations that enabled them to gain the necessary political networks to overcome some of the structural opportunities of society, or chose to criticize the system and seek for alternatives ways of being. I named the latter group Critics. As the name already clearly suggests, they more openly criticized the system and current power structures of the country as well as the expectations placed upon them by society. Yet, they also thought that they themselves were somewhat responsible for their own opportunities. These students seem to be equally aware of the power relations and the benefits that entering a certain field could bring, but remained critical towards the opportunity structures of society. As a result, some of them were actively trying to find alternative ways of being, living and studying in Nicaragua. Others were planning to leave the country after graduation.

Most of the students who could be grouped under the Critics had a more holistic view of the spheres of life, as they considered that everything affected everything in society. As the Hyperactives clearly separated work from other spheres of life, many of the Critics felt that the two were very much interconnected as one's leisure time activities, family values and those who one spends time with also affect the way one sees working life. This was somewhat reflected in the areas they wished to work in, which were often related to culture or education. Some of the students in this group criticized in particular the focus on making money and concentrating only on material needs. One of the participants I interviewed felt that the need to make money was imposed on the young by others: "We're studying to make money, really the discourse is I'm going to make money. But it's not our discourse, it's not ours."¹⁷⁰

The student who made this comment came from very poor conditions himself, and had fought hard to be able to continue his studies. However, he felt that the sole focus on money was damaging both to individuals and to society at large. He, like some others belonging to this group, was interested in the

¹⁷⁰ *Male H1, born 1986-1992*. Original in Spanish: Estamos estudiando por voy a ganar, realmente el discurso es voy a ganar dinero. Pero no es nuestro discurso, no es nuestro.

arts, particularly acting. He told me that his hobby in a local theatre had made him question some of the power structures of society as well as the power relations within the university:

Artists critique, artists shed light on problems, that is to say that we artists shed light on problems and make these problems visible, noticeable. At the universities ... they fulfill an institutional purpose and they tell you that when you check their web pages.. You go to the department of culture or art, everything tells you they have institutional pressure at the university. And it's not bad, but ... There are things at the university, they do interesting things and let the artists work a little, but they work according to the model of objectives and results. Suddenly it follows just one line. They should be interested in experimenting as well, let things grow. They [faculty members in the art department] should notice the things that are happening at the university too, not just classical theatre. There is corruption, there is trafficking of power, there is a lack of respect. For example, we participate in the elections of the student union, but suddenly you notice they allow corruption at the student elections.¹⁷¹

Within this group, the decisions the students took seemed to vary: some decided to openly critique the system, some had decided to take action and use their studies to develop new ways of taking part in society, such as unofficial student groups, theater groups or interacting with students from abroad. Yet, in this group could also be found students who opted to leave the country immediately after graduation. For them, the biggest motivation to continue their studies was the possibility of immigrating.

Interestingly, Mercado and Vasquez (2012: 39-40) report similar groups in their study, for which the material was collected in 2010, two years prior to my material collection. Their study focuses on the subjectivity, political culture and social reproduction of the political culture of urban young people living in the metropolitan area of Managua. Their results are based in a very different setting than my own, since their research is quantitative and based on a survey with a specific starting point of researching young people as agents of progress and change. Moreover, the study does not specify which of the respondents were students, nor who were working or unemployed, nor do they analyze the

¹⁷¹ *Male H1, born 1986-1992*. Original in Spanish: Los artistas criticamos, los artistas le ponemos la luz a los problemas, o sea los artistas le ponemos la luz a los problemas y hacemos que los problemas se vean, se hacen notar. En las universidades...cumplen una función institucional y te lo dicen por revisar las páginas web. Te vas al departamento de la cultura o arte, todo te dice que tienen la presión institucional de la universidad. Y no está mal, pero...Hay cosas en la universidad, hacen cosas interesantes y dejan trabajar un poco los artistas, pero trabajan de acuerdo del modelo de objetivos y resultados. De repente sigue una misma línea. También deberían interesarse en la parte de experimentación, deja que las cosas crezcan. Deberían dar cuenta en las cosas que están pasando en la universidad también, no solo el teatro clásico. Hay corrupción, hay tráfico del poder, hay desatención. Por ejemplo, nos metemos en las elecciones de unión estudiantil, pero de repente te encuentras que ellos permiten que haya corrupción en la elección estudiantil.

specific results in the light of these factors. Yet, two of the groups they have identified are very similar to the groups I have named the Hyperactives and the Critics. A group named *Individualistas* by Mercado and Vasquez (2012: 39) portrays similar characteristics as Hyperactives, specifically a strong internal sense of self-control. A group they named *Reformistas no tradicionales* portrays similar characteristics as Critics, specifically the tendency to advocate for societal change. However, the latter group they have identified tended to wish for change to occur within traditional order, while the students I named as Critics were searching for various alternatives, often outside the existing status quo. The questions used in Mercado and Vasquez's study are not specified, and they do not analyze the factors behind the responses to any great degree. However, to the extent that both my research and their research reveal similar groupings, their results support mine. Investigating these groups further would also be an interesting subject for future research.

Most of the students independent of the group I identified valued their family and shared strong family values. However, I noticed that some of the students were a lot more focused on their families than others. I named this group Family Centered. For family-centered students, the family, and especially preparing to have their own family one-day, were the principal starting points as well as the goal for the future. They also shared a strong emphasis on traditional values and morals, and valued leisure time, particularly family time. For many of the students in this group studies were most of all a path to form a family of their own. Some of them had made specific plans to fulfill their family goals, as one of the interviewees explained when I asked about his plans:

I already have my dates planned, to have a family, at 22 I should have a girlfriend who is going to be my fiancée, get married at 24, by thirty have a good job and my own house, keep working, have children, take care of myself, and in my last years be at home with my family.¹⁷²

Another interest of his was his competitive sports hobby, which he emphasized as the second most important area of his life. Most were not this systematic with their plans, but did put having a family of their own as their number one priority in life, after which often came things that were unrelated to career goals, such as hobbies, religion, or simply *vivir comodo*, living comfortably, as one of the interviewees put it. For him and some of the other students in this group, studying was a way to

¹⁷² *Male H5, born 1986-1992*. Original in Spanish: Yo tengo ya mis fechas para terminar, tener una familia, a los 22 debo tener una novia que va a ser mi comprometida, lo 24 casarme, a los treinta a tener un buen trabajo y mi casa, seguir trabajando, tener mis hijos, cuidarme, y ya mis últimos años en mi casa con mi familia

continue a family business. He told me the reason he chose his career and came all the way to Managua to study was the family coffee business: “My family works in agriculture, growing coffee ... so I want to improve it, push the farm forward, maybe open a coffee brand for the family. I’m concentrating on that, on advancing the family business.”¹⁷³

There were also a few students who had chosen their career to fulfill their parents’ dreams, as one of the participants told me about his decision to study medicine: “My father wanted to study medicine, but at 16 my mother got pregnant. So I think I first started out to compensate him, to tell him I would be continuing his dream.”¹⁷⁴ Class seems to be one but not the only explanatory factor behind a focus on the family. Many of the students in this group came from very poor backgrounds, and most from the rural areas of the country. Many of them were also the first in their family to get a university degree. Thus, for many in this group studies were a very concrete effort to advance in society and gain a better life for the family.

Some of the students who participated in this study seemed to be quite content about everything. They did not express heavy criticism, they were not particularly concerned about their future or anything else around them and did not seem to be anxious about their studies or future work opportunities. I named this group the Go with the Flows since they seemed to welcome whatever circumstances brought their way. These students also seemed to be those who moved quite effortlessly within different fields and adapted cognitively to different social situations without any particular difficulty. They welcomed all opportunities and were very open to new experiences, but did not actively seek them out or make particular efforts to search for new things or experiences. As one of the students responded when I asked whether she would be interested in studying or working abroad: “Well if the opportunity presents itself ... I’m interested. I mean if someone asks me to go, yes.”¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ *Male H6, born 1986-1992*. Original in Spanish: Mi familia trabaja en eso de agricultura, cultivar café ... así que yo quiero avanzar eso, avanzar la finca, talvez abrir una marca de café para la familia. Me enfoco en eso, avanzar el negocio de mi familia.

¹⁷⁴ *Male 3, Group 1*. Original in Spanish: Mi papá quería estudiar medicina pero a los 16 años salió embarazada mi mama. Creo que yo en principio comencé a querer a gratificarle a él, decirle yo voy a continuar tu sueño.

¹⁷⁵ *Female, G5, born 1986-1992*. Original in Spanish: Pues si me presenta la oportunidad... me interesa. Digo si me llaman a irme, si.



Picture 9. Students spending time after classes in Boaco, 2012.

Another student explained he was very open to new experiences:

International jobs are very welcome. The language is another thing, English, the basics of English. I say if they ask me to go to, I don't know, to Finland, let's go. It's an experience you need to take, you shouldn't fear anything. My dad told me how about I send you to Venezuela to study, and I say where do I sign up? If one sees another culture the way of thinking also changes.¹⁷⁶

However, when I asked him whether he had made some specific plans to be able to have these opportunities, such as taking more English courses, he said he had not, but that he would be ready to seize the opportunities if and when presented. The students belonging to this group seemed to put more emphasis on leisure-time activities and especially time spent with peer groups. Hence, the

¹⁷⁶ *Male H10, born 1986-1992.* Original in Spanish: Trabajos internacionales bienvenidos sean. El idioma también es otra cosa, inglés, el básico de inglés. Digo yo si me llaman a irme, no sé, a Finlandia, vamos. Es una experiencia, que vos tenes que agarrar, no hay que tener miedo de nada. Mi papa dijo si te mando a Venezuela a estudiar, yo digo donde afirmo? Si uno ve a otra cultura va cambiando su forma de pensar.

students who belonged to this group seemed to possess more social capital attained from peer groups than the students in the other groups. According to Helve and Bynner (2007), peer groups can be a place to gain social capital, as well as a means to resolve identity. Friendships in general can be social resources as well as components of social capital, and as such provide both social networks as well as emotional resources (Weller 2007: 107-126, 2010: 872-888). These resources on the other hand may help one to adapt to a variety of social situations, as was the case with the students in this group.

Furlong and Cartmel (2007: 6-7) suggest that reaching a goal, whether it is a certain job position or an educational qualification, requires the mobilization of both structural resources such as economic, cultural and social capital as well as capacities indicative of agency, such as motivation. Even though the mobilization of these resources may be partly unconscious, one usually has some degree of awareness of the resources available and the obstacles they may face. This study did not originally set out to map the links between structure and agency in school-to-work transition, and hence I cannot make any large-scale theoretical generalizations or hypothesis on the matter based on my material. However, in the light of the groups identified from my material, investigating further the relation of capital, agency and higher-level education, as well as transitions to the labor market specifically in the Latin American or Nicaraguan cultural context, would in my opinion be an interesting and important subject for future study.

As discussed previously in this study, the current changes in the world and the difficulties of defining stages such as youth and adulthood have led to scholars developing new 'life stages,' Arnett's (2004) term 'emerging adulthood' having produced probably the most discussion. Based on his material, Flacks (2007: 65) presents an interesting and extremely important observation on the phenomenon of creating new concepts such as emerging adulthood, though the young people themselves do not necessarily embrace these suggested new life stages. Flacks researched young military enlistees, and noticed that the young men he interviewed were searching for ways to be recognized as adults in society, rather than wishing to identify as an emerging adult. Thus, the goal was a direct transition to a status of a fully recognized adult member of society. The students I interviewed identified themselves as young, though none of them embraced any sort of 'in between' social status. Instead, they aimed towards full social recognition and wished to be considered adults in society after their studies and sought to accomplish these transitions through their studies.

For Bourdieu (1984), interconnection between practice and theory is essential in understanding social and cultural spaces. What people do, their practices, are both social and cultural, and hence reflect a way of life. Bourdieu has argued that the field of educational institutions contributes to the reproduction of advantages and disadvantages through imparting cultural resources as well as signaling the symbolic value of individuals' qualifications to others. Since this study focuses on university-level students, the field of education, in this case the university, forms a major part of the experiences of the young people studied. As already discussed, a university degree does not automatically guarantee a position in the labor market. However, as I shall show in the following section, my results indicate that studying and graduating hold great value as a transition rite to adult status both within the family unit and in society at large.

As already discussed in this study, transition perspectives have been criticized in the field of youth studies. Miles (2000: 147) even argues that “young people do not go through easily identifiable rites of passages.” In the light of my material this is not exactly the case in the Nicaraguan society. I agree as far as the statement that not all young people go through the same rites of passage. However, this again is related to the social and cultural contexts, the social space that the young people in question live their lives in. My material clearly shows that for most of the participants, regardless of the previously identified group they could be seen to belong to, completing their education is an important transition. All the interview participants used the term ‘professional’ when discussing their plans for the future. This caught my attention since the term was repeated in all the interviews and I myself did not use the expression in this context, or the specific word in any other context. Many of the participants talked about themselves in two different roles: as someone private who has, and wishes to have, certain things in one’s private life, and as a professional, someone with a specific role in society. The notion of being a professional was often related to the future, whether it was concrete plans or dreams, and many participants changed their vocabulary and even their tone of voice to a more formal expression when discussing their professional plans.

When the students talked about their future and hopes, becoming a professional, as they themselves put it, was something everyone wished for. Becoming a professional does not only include graduation, a possibility of gaining a better living or steady employment, rather it includes the whole educational experience as a process of becoming part of society. Apart from financial independence, the students I discussed with emphasized mental and intellectual independence, as well as full membership and recognition in the community. As I spent time with the students it became clear that for all of them being a professional was in part a separate identity from the sphere of home and leisure time, with a different vocabulary, attitude, and composure alongside of wider social networks and new abilities. One of the students explained what he wants from the future: “My plan for the future ... Become a professional, independent. Get all the things one wants.”

177

¹⁷⁷ *Male H7, born 1986-1992.* Original in Spanish: Mi plan para el futuro...llegar a ser un profesional, independiente. Obtener todas las cosas que uno desea.

“All the things one wants” did not only include material things or economic independence, but a specific role in society and in the family. Brazilian anthropologist Roberto DaMatta (1991) has coined the dichotomy of two different social universes, the home and the street, as private and public spheres respectively. For DaMatta an individual does not refer to individualism in the sense it is often used to describe one’s individual aspirations, but to a person in the sphere of the street, a sphere of anonymity. A person in the public sphere is an individual with no attributes, which allows one to be treated differently. In the private sphere of life at home, on the other hand, a person is positioned and defined according to certain social prerogatives. DaMatta analyzes specifically the Brazilian social world, but does extend his observation of the two mutually exclusive domains, the unpredictable and autonomous space of the street and the controlled universe of the home, to the spheres of the urban cities of Latin America and Mediterranean (DaMatta 1991: 64-65).

DaMatta’s notion of different spheres and positions allows an analysis of position making in two different social universes and through two logics operating in encompassing hierarchical systems. My aim here is not to form an analysis of the street/home and person/individual dichotomy in the context of the Nicaraguan society, but rather to use DaMatta’s insight to analyze the meaning of certain transitions in the life course, in this case the students’ path through their studies toward graduation. As argued before, transition may contain far more significances and deeper meanings than would appear from the surface.

In the light of DaMatta’s notion, my material shows that becoming a professional is a transitional rite of changing one’s position both in the spheres of home and the street. In some other societies moving away from the parents’ house is a transition to adult status. As discussed previously, this is not a common practice in Nicaragua. However, many of the students I interviewed expressed the idea that their position as a person within the family would also change with the studies, and they would become an adult member of the family. Becoming a professional, on the other hand, marked a transition and a process of transforming from an ‘individual’ (anonymous) to a ‘person’ (someone with social status) in the public sphere of society. Thus, studying is not just a way of acquiring better access to economic capital or a necessity to maintain oneself financially, but also an important rite and transition to adulthood, a process of endorsing a new place and role in society, independent of possible labor market integration.

The students themselves also saw their journey at the university as a transition towards a new social status. Many of the participants discussed this journey with me. One of them explained: “When we reach a certain point in the university we are not just kids anymore, we are more mature, we know what we want. I feel a lot more confidence in myself.”¹⁷⁸ Another commented: “The university is like another world, we need to achieve more by our own effort.”¹⁷⁹

This transition was also an active process towards the social status they wanted to achieve. As the students described the processes of completing their studies, several of them used the expression “voy formandome,” that best translates as molding or shaping oneself to becoming something. In this case, they were shaping themselves to become professionals. As one of the students expressed it when we discussed how studies had changed some of his opinions of society:

Me:	So your opinions have changed during your studies? ¹⁸⁰
Male H10, born 1986-1992:	Yes, my attitude, I am already molding myself to become a professional. ¹⁸¹

These results demonstrate that the students are not looking to embrace any kind of new age status, or ‘emerging adulthood,’ but aim to be fully recognized adult members of society.

In the light of my material, being a student creates valuable social and cultural capital and studies are a rite of passage towards a new role in society. Virtanen (2007: 270-294) has documented similar results in her research on the Amazonas, where she also notes that being a student creates social capital, such as useful new networks. Tolonen (2007: 33) points out that the concept of cultural capital as an analytical tool has been popular in European sociology of education, yet the analysis has focused mostly on explaining single students’ school success by their school culture and their family background. I wish to emphasize that apart from focusing on explaining school-to-work transitions and study success through the cultural capital attained from one’s family background, we should also pay attention to the social capital produced during the studies and through peer groups, since I argue it is the combination of these two that affect the transitions. Thus, I agree with Helve and Bynner (2007:1) that as young

¹⁷⁸ *Female G1, born 1986-1992.* Original in Spanish: Cuando llegamos en una etapa de la universidad ya no somos unos niños, maduramos más, ya sabemos lo que queremos. Me siento más confianza en mí misma.

¹⁷⁹ *Male H8, born 1986-1992.* Original in Spanish: La universidad ya es otro mundo, tenemos que valer más de nosotros mismos.

¹⁸⁰ Original in Spanish: Entonces tus opiniones han cambiado estudiando?

¹⁸¹ Original in Spanish: Si, la actitud, ya voy formándome como un profesional.

people move toward a new position in society, the social capital of peer groups that supplies the means for coping with uncertainties is “of major interest in its own right.”

Based on my material, I argue that among Nicaraguan students, education is a value in itself. Parents often proudly refer to the young students of the family as *universitarios*. When discussing with young Nicaraguans they often point out how education is important, despite the economic circumstances. Even though most of the students wished their studies would open doors to permanent employment, many of them expressed the notion that being educated had a value that could not only be measured by material means or one’s future salary. Comments like “we are nothing without education” were frequently made. 96% of the survey respondents aimed to graduate with high grades, and almost 85% of them stated it was important for them to gain a lot of money. Yet, when I discussed with the students, it became clear that most of them felt that education gave them an ability to understand their society better and was valuable as such. As one of the participants in Group 2. put it: “To study is also to take responsibility, to understand better what ... what is going on around you.”¹⁸² Graduation and studying also changes one’s position in the family. As one of the interview participants told me: “I am becoming an adult in the family now. They don’t see me as a child anymore, I am becoming a professional, someone who is listened to.”¹⁸³

¹⁸² Original in Spanish: Estudiar también es tomar responsabilidad, entender mejor que es...que es lo que está pasando alrededor. *Male C, Group 2*

¹⁸³ Original in Spanish: Estoy llegando a ser una adulta en la familia. Ya no me ven como una chavala, estoy llegando a ser una profesional, alguien a quien se escucha. *Female G4, born 1986-1992*

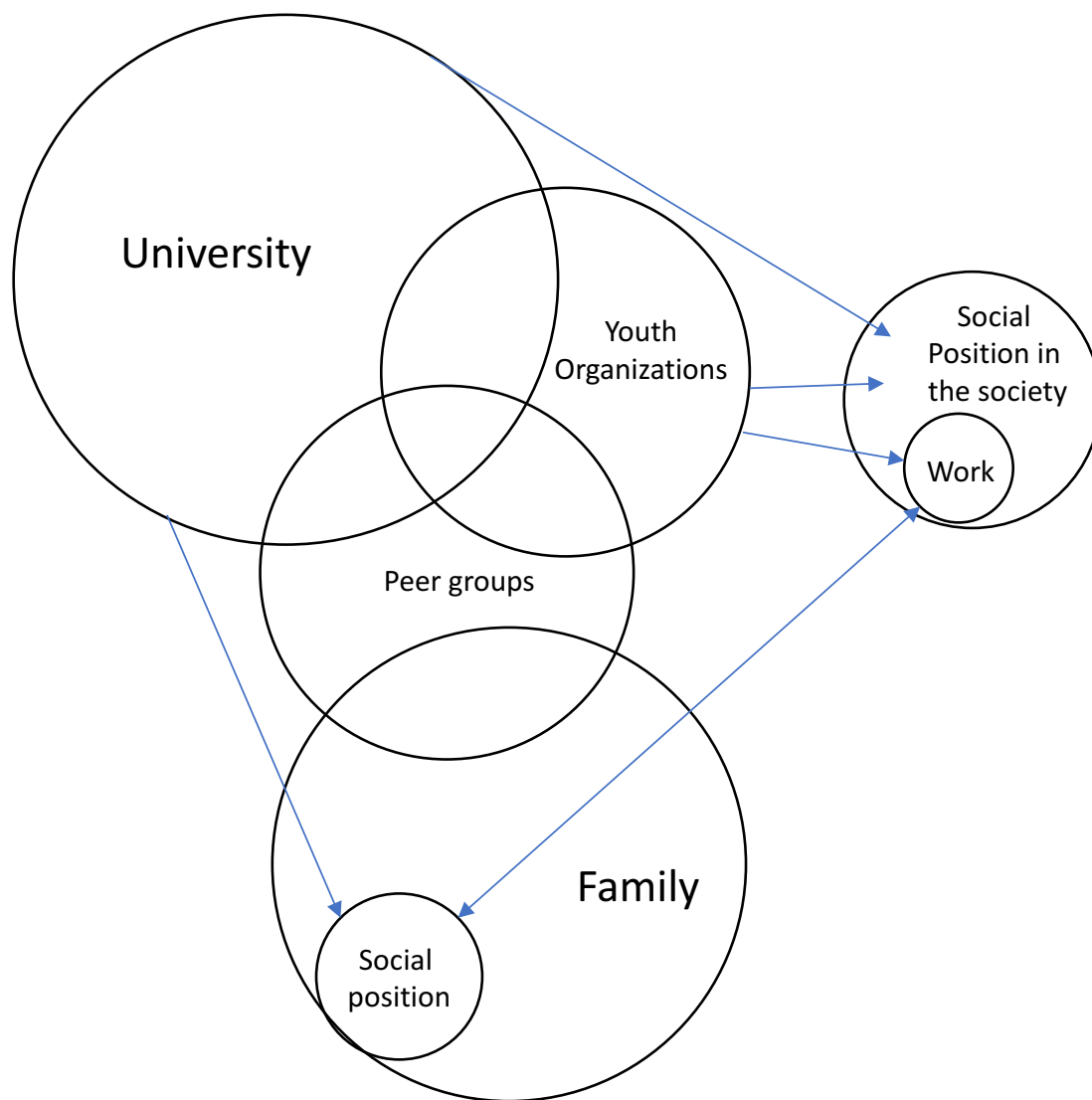


Figure 10. Presentation of the production of social positions in identified social fields.

Thus, studies are not only a passage to a position in the labor market, they are also a transition to a specific status and recognition in society. Being a professional is not tied to having a job and working, since having a steady employment is not the only thing that dictates one's position in society. Rather, the students feel that education brings them certain status in society, and this status may include working, not the other way around. The production of social positions in the social fields identified in this study is presented in Figure 10. As has been shown, studies enhance cultural capital and the networks acquired through studies are valuable social capital, and in some cases taking part in youth organizations also provides the social capital to acquire a certain (professional) position in society. This position seems to hold whether one is working or not; instead, the notion of work is included in this position as part of social status. Interestingly, one's social position within the family seems to be constructed of both work and studies. Especially in the rural areas of the country it is very common that all members of the family, independent of age, work. Thus, employment does not necessarily mean adult status in the family, as graduating, becoming a professional, does.

In conclusion, even though education does not offer the students a secure promise of social integration via labor market integration, being a student gives the students the opportunity to create other kinds of benefits and useful social networks. Through this process, they can seek recognition as fully recognized adult members both in society and within their family. Hence, being a student and becoming a professional is an important ritual in the transition to adulthood, a process of acquiring the abilities and accomplishments to claim recognition in society, and it also offers a possibility to change one's position in the personal spheres of life in one's home and one's community.

Based on what has been discussed above, I have shown that transitions and rites are still important in young people's lives and worthy of further attention in academic studies as well. As already discussed, class remains a central concept in understanding the experiences of the students who participated in this study. In addition to class, gender affects transitions and life experiences, and as Tolonen (2007: 38) notes, social and cultural capital are also produced through gendered processes. Even though gender has been a factor I have considered throughout my analysis, I felt it was necessary to discuss the theme in a separate chapter as well, to which I now turn.

10. Gender Reworked: Discourses, Traditions and Equality

*Dos cosas que yo no decidí decidieron mi vida:
el país donde nací y el sexo con el que vine al mundo.*¹⁸⁴

Giogonda Belli, El país bajo mi piel

In the forthcoming sections I discuss gender equality in Nicaragua and the meanings attached to it. I approach gender as a social construction. I begin by briefly presenting the gender equality situation in Nicaragua and the new laws regarding abortion and violence against women that have been passed during the last decade. I shall show that there are two contradictory discourses on gender equality in Nicaraguan society that have created complex interpretations of both the meaning of the term gender, and the behavior expected where equal treatment is concerned. My results show that despite a change in power relations relating to gender, many traditional images still underlie present-day discussions and attitudes. In the light of my material I argue that gender equality has become a necessary consideration in the list of values a student is expected to uphold, and gender remains an important structuring factor as we research the lives of the young.

Señor Obispo, Saque Su Rosario de Nuestros Ovarios: Gender Equality in Nicaragua

Gender equality is an ongoing conversation in Nicaraguan society. It is also a discussion that sometimes seems to follow a loop that was defined several decades ago. Before going much deeper into this theme I feel it is important to mention that during the course of my research and especially when I was writing this chapter I became very conscious of my own position as a researcher. The preliminary

¹⁸⁴ Two things I did not decide decided my life: the country I was born into, and the sex with which I was born.

results that later formed this chapter were presented in 2013 at the Youth Studies Conference at Glasgow University. As I continued my research I noticed that as a North European female, and an intersectional feminist, this topic is something that I look at using a very different lens than many Nicaraguan women. Thus, I feel it is important to discuss this a little further before moving on to present my results.

Nicaragua is currently ranked 10th of 144 countries in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report (WEF 2016).¹⁸⁵ The Global Gender Gap Report is a report that measures inequality between men and women. One of its criteria is health and survival. Nicaragua has banned abortion under all circumstances, even if the mother's life is in danger, so the country's high ranking surprised me, even though it must be kept in mind that the report is the result of several factors. Nicaragua's ranking was picked up by several media and an image was created that there are no severe gender-based issues in the country. Certainly, there are areas of life where the situation is good; when it comes, for example, to literacy rate or enrollment in education there isn't any significant gender gap (WEF 2016). In the beginning of 2012 I conducted a small survey among Nicaraguan university students for *KIMPPU* magazine.¹⁸⁶ The theme of the 2012 publications was human rights, and I asked the students what was the most important human right for them. The right to education was the answer of every one of them. The sample of this survey was not big and the questions were limited for the purpose of the magazine article, thus based solely on the *KIMPPU* survey I would not be able to make many generalizations. However, many of the students I later interviewed for this study brought up the same thing: how the right to education was the most important thing for them.

As mentioned above, since enrollment to both elementary and higher levels of education is very equal in Nicaragua, and when it comes to university-level studies more women enroll than men (WEF 2016), it may be that for many young Nicaraguan women the right to study is the most important indication of equality. Thus, while for me women's right to study was taken for granted, for many Nicaraguan women this has only become a reality over the last few decades. This demonstrates how personal values and standpoints affect the meaning we attach to concepts such as gender equality; for me personally the country's abortion law is such a significant factor that I myself would never rank Nicaragua this high for gender equality. There are, however, many women in Nicaragua, including many female

¹⁸⁵ To give some kind of perspective, Iceland holds first position and Yemen is ranked last.

¹⁸⁶ *KIMPPU* is the annual publication of the Committee for Development Cooperation at the University of Helsinki Student Union. The 2012 magazine can be read online at <https://issuu.com/kimppu/docs/kimppu-2012>

participants in this research, whose opinions on questions such as abortion, contraception, and the rights of women, men and sexual minorities differ very much from my own opinion. As already stated in this study, I expected gender-based discrimination to be one of the most reported issues, yet questions of political ideology, age, religion and domicile outnumbered gender-based questions. This being stated, I have kept this difference of values, personal beliefs and cultural context in mind and have tried to accurately report what the participants expressed as well as presenting my own opinions as transparently as possible.

The heading of this section is from a statement by Matagalpa women's association, La Red de Mujeres de Matagalpa, from February 2012.¹⁸⁷ Matagalpa is the fourth-largest city in the country and the capital of the department of Matagalpa. In English, the text says: "Mister Bishop, get your prayer beads out of our ovaries." The statement was provoked by the actions of a local Catholic bishop, Obispo Rolando Álvarez, who argued that all pharmacies in Matagalpa should stop selling contraceptives, including condoms, for he saw them as abortive and as such against Nicaraguan law. I had left Nicaragua just a few days before this statement was published and was writing an article about gender equality in Nicaragua for Global.finland.com when I received a call from a Managuan friend of mine. He had visited his girlfriend's family in Matagalpa and they had tried to purchase condoms. There were none. My friend was extremely angry, as was his Catholic girlfriend, and I ended up writing a short story on the incident. Later, after some heated public debate, critique, and discussion, condoms and other contraceptives again appeared in the pharmacies of Matagalpa. This incident took place just a few months before I started my survey and interviews for this research.

As mentioned earlier, the Catholic Church has a strong historical influence in Nicaragua, and themes such as birth control and the abolition of therapeutic abortion in 2006 are still to some extent present on the everyday agenda. The country has a long history of both caudillo, or strongman, politics, as well as women's movements. Nicaraguan women played an important part in the country's revolutionary process, and I consider it is partly due to this historical heritage that the conversation and academic research on gender in Nicaragua has been highly focused on either the women's movement or women's rights in general. Even though research on masculinities has increased significantly in Latin America as authors have underlined the importance of understanding femininity and masculinity as relational

¹⁸⁷ The statement can be read online at <http://elcorreonicaraguense.blogspot.fi/2012/02/sr-obispo-saque-su-rosario-de-nuestros.html>.

categories (French and Bliss 2007: 10), when it comes to Nicaragua, going through existing research sometimes gives the impression that Nicaraguan men are without gender: only women are thought to be gendered. This critique is by no means intended to ignore or diminish the importance of the research that has focused on the situation of the Nicaraguan women and women's movements. Nicaraguan women participated actively in revolutionary organizations, took part in demonstrations against the dictatorship, coordinated participation in the insurrection, and constituted some 20 percent of the armed combatants in the guerrilla movement (Chinchilla 1994: 177-197).

During their rise to power after the 1979 revolution the leaders of the FSLN set out to make concrete improvements to the situation of Nicaraguan women. However, many of the new laws and improvements were left aside during the civil war that began in the 1980s (Kampwirth 2004: 23). At the beginning of the 1990s, the FSLN lost the election to the right-wing opposition party, UNO. When the revolution era leader and President, Daniel Ortega, returned to power in 2006, the FSLN supported a new law that abolished therapeutic abortion. Nicaraguan women's movements were at the time too split internally to effectively rise against the decision. The Catholic Church was actively portrayed and involved in the presidential campaign, and alongside the slogans once used in the revolution there was also a new traditional Catholic, and quite anti-feminist message (Kampwirth 2012: 171-175).



Picture 10. A famous image of a female guerrilla breastfeeding during the 1979 revolution is portrayed among the remnants of arms in Galeria de Heroés y Martirez, Estelí, 2009.

Despite national and international critique, the abortion law is still in effect. The abortion law and the gender discourse of the Catholic Church in general have been in direct conflict with the demands of several donors and non-governmental organizations that have worked in Nicaragua since the revolution. Most of the donors have advocated gender equality, and the discourse against traditional gender roles and gender-based discrimination has been deeply embedded in Nicaraguan society and governmental institutions over the last two decades. This has created a situation where two opposing discourses operate on different levels and spheres of everyday life. On the one hand, there is strong international discourse focused on equal rights, empowering women and demolishing violence against women, that is also somewhat supported on a national level by laws such as the new law against violence that women encounter based on their gender.¹⁸⁸ At the same time, the abortion law still stands, and as Kampwirth (2012: 177) observes, even though many Sandinistas opposed the abolition of therapeutic abortion,

¹⁸⁸ Ley Integral en Contra de la Violencia hacia las Mujeres. Legislated 26 January 2016.

they nonetheless voted to support it, since voting against it would have been voting against Ortega and their own personal histories related to the FSLN.

Weatherall (2002: 67) underlines that gender relations are constantly renegotiated in society. This negotiation and renegotiation also takes place through the language used at an institutional level, since “gender relations are reflected in language by who gets to speak and who gets heard.” This is evident in Nicaraguan society as well, as power relations and institutional structures shape the conversations on gender and equality and construct the social worlds. As I shall discuss in the following sections, many students who participated in the study were not particularly interested in discussing themes related to gender or gender equality. I also noted that despite the relative lack of interest, being able to adapt and reproduce an equal rights discourse seems to be a central part of the students’ identity, especially for many male students who participated in this study. At the same time the attitudes of many have not changed drastically toward a more equal approach, but instead have been shaped into an idea close to ‘caballerismo,’ a term used by some scholars to describe a positive form of machismo, namely men providing and caring for their family.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁹ The negative and positive (machismo vs caballerismo) assessment of machismo is found especially in psychology and sociology. Scholars have also developed scales for measuring the different dimensions of machismo. See e.g. Arciniega and Anderson 2008, Laracantu 1989, Villemez and Touhey 1977.

Young Masculinities and Femininities: Contesting the Traditional Images?

As stated before, Nicaragua is demographically a young nation and it is also the young who are most affected by the contradictory atmosphere created by conflicting gender discourses. Even though the country has a long history of women's movements, traditional gender roles are deeply rooted in the everyday interactions and structures of society. As Weatherall (2002: 78) states, the way in which gender is produced and reproduced through the language of everyday interactions is of great importance. Wolfson and Manes (1980: 79-110) investigated the address forms in the language used in public service encounters in the United States. According to their results, men were addressed respectfully with expressions such as 'sir,' while women of the same status were commonly addressed in a more familiar form as 'honey,' 'love' or 'dear.' I have noticed the same pattern of interaction in Nicaragua; when using public services, running errands or using services such as restaurants and cafes, my female friends and I are mostly referred to as 'love,' 'dear' or 'cutie,'¹⁹⁰ while our male companions are usually referred to as 'mister' or 'sir.'¹⁹¹

On some occasions, when a man accompanies a woman, it may even happen that she is not addressed at all, or is addressed through the male companion; the interaction with the woman is in the third person through her male companion. In their investigation, Wolfson and Manes (1980: 87) underline that apart from traditional address forms and terms of endearment the lack of an overt address form can be just as meaningful as the address form chosen. The selection of an address form, or the lack of it appears in the same linguistic context, thus the selection of the address form used implies a difference in social meaning. During the time I spent in Nicaragua, I encountered several situations like the ones described above. Apart from daily informal interactions, this also happens in formal situations, such as visits to a hospital or a police station. To give one example, in 2011 I assisted a female traveler who had been robbed in Managua. Since she did not speak Spanish, I accompanied her to the local police station to report the offense. The detective who received us, a male officer approximately my age, referred to me as 'guapa' (cutie) throughout the interaction. When we left he commented that I had a nice body and should dress differently to look more feminine. The entire conversation took place at the police station during the formal procedures. I mentioned this to a local female friend, and she commented that it is quite usual that police officers address women like this when they interact with the police or

¹⁹⁰ In Spanish: amor, corazón, guapa.

¹⁹¹ In Spanish: señor, caballero.

other institutions without a male companion. If they are accompanied by a male relative or friend, the interaction is formal, and often goes through the male companion.

As said before, the abortion ban was an item of gender-equality news that was noted in the international press as well, albeit briefly. The law sparked heated discussion on reproductive health issues and gender equality in Nicaragua for a while but was soon set aside. Even though the ban mainly affects young women, the commentators who were allowed public space were mostly the same faces that had discussed the theme since the revolution. Apart from abortion, the public conversation on gender tends to focus on sexual health and preventing teenage pregnancies. Since themes such as reproductive rights particular affect the young, gender equality is something that the young are often assumed to support and to be interested in. However, when it comes to discussion and research on gender equality, the young are seldom asked how they understand the concept or how norms and regulations related to gender or sexuality affect their lives, even though the discourses produced on an institutional level have a strong impact on the social world the young live in.

As French and Bliss (2007: 12) argue, discourses are built environments that produce knowledge, and link power and knowledge by positioning the speaker(s) and those named by the discourse. The statements, images and symbols we use portray and represent subjects and create subject positions where power is circulated by locating those naming the subject and those to be named. The current conversation on gender and equality in Nicaragua represents more the people who already participated in the conversation decades ago than the respondents of this study. At the same time the discourses reproduce gendered images of the young through locating young women and men in specific roles and expectations that they themselves may not even recognize or accept: oppressors, the oppressed, or youth at risk due to unwanted teenage pregnancies.

According to my results, when it came to gender, the theme that created most discussion among the students was not the abortion law, violence against women, sexual health, or pregnancies at a young age, but the gender images the students felt they were expected to uphold in society. The main focus was on the behavior, appearance and interests that were expected from boys and girls, and young women and young men. These images were one of the things many respondents in this study wished to contest. As one of the students who studied engineering explained when we discussed her career choices:

- Me: Have you ever had to justify or explain your choice of study path to anyone?¹⁹²
- Female G4, born 1986-1992: Yes. I was told I couldn't study this. That it is for boys. But that was just like a push for me, made me want it even more.¹⁹³
- Me: Do you think this kind of thing happens often? Assumptions like that?¹⁹⁴
- Female G4, born 1986-1992: Yes I think so. A friend of mine, a boy, wanted to be a nurse. He was told he couldn't study such a girly profession, that he should become a doctor. So he chose something else.¹⁹⁵

The traditional image of Latin American gender roles has been made up of two stereotypes: the hegemonic, patriarchal macho man, and the Virgin Mary-like, feminine, passive, and all-suffering woman. The family has been a core institution for constructing normative gender discourses (Dore 1997: 101-114). The concepts 'machismo' and 'marianismo' have been criticized and contested, but they still need to be mentioned when discussing gender roles in Latin America. Especially studies on Latin American men have contested the traditional image of the Latin American macho man. Research on men and gender, and men producing gender only began in Latin America in the 1980s, and most research faced the challenge of analyzing what it means to be a man in the Latin American context (Vigoya 2004: 27-52). In the light of my material, men having gender is still a somewhat untouched topic in Nicaraguan society. Even though research has moved beyond the dichotomy of 'macho' and 'maría,' many aspects behind the stereotypes are still seen in the everyday lives of many Latin Americans. As stated earlier, Nicaraguan society still hosts several norms, attitudes, and practices that uphold traditional images.

As already discussed above, in Nicaragua the language used when addressing women and men is often different, and certain career choices are very gendered, as they are in many other countries as well. Many job advertisements are also designed solely for either women or men, depending on the nature of the position offered. Even though most of the students I interviewed recognized the negative implications of stereotypes such as the idea of women's and men's jobs, when it came to machismo and feminism the responses varied. As shown in Figure 11, when the survey respondents were asked if they

¹⁹² Original in Spanish: Alguna vez tuvisteis que justificar por haber elegido esa carrera?

¹⁹³ Original in Spanish: Si. Me dijeron que no puedo estudiar esto. Que es para los muchachos. Pero eso fue solo como un empuje para mí, me hizo quererlo aún más.

¹⁹⁴ Original in Spanish: Piensas que eso pasa frecuentemente? Que se presupone cosas así?

¹⁹⁵ Original in Spanish: Si pienso que si. Un amigo, un muchacho, quería ser enfermero. Le dijeron que no puede estudiar algo tan de chavalas, que mejor llegar a ser un doctor. Pues eligió otra cosa.

felt that young men are less macho than old men, the responses were very divided. Interestingly, the term ‘machist’ is commonly used both as a negative accusation as well as an explanatory factor in everyday discussions in Nicaragua. For example, if a man expresses distrust in the ability of a woman he is very quickly called a machist. Thus, a man critiquing a woman’s performance is quite often labeled as machismo, whether the reason behind the critique is gender related or not. On the other hand, sometimes men criticize women and tone the critique down by ending the critique with the phrase “although I’m not a machist.” I noted that some of the male students who participated in this study used this expression, as well as some of their friends when they discussed issues related to gender among their peers. The same expression occurred with the survey respondents as well. One of the survey respondents wrote a comment to a question concerning the importance of the rule of former Nicaraguan president Violeta Chamorro, who remains the only female president in the history of the country. He wrote: “It is important but it is not good because in Nicaragua women are not very good for politics (although I’m not a machist).”¹⁹⁶

The negation of machismo as part of a very gender-stereotyped statement seems to be a way to justify the statement while locating oneself in the position that is expected of young male students, namely defending gender equality and condemning machismo. The term ‘machist’ is also used to reproduce an image of women and ‘correct’ femininity. In everyday speech women who contest traditional gender roles or behave in ways that are considered ‘unrespectable’ are sometimes called machist, derogatively implying how unfeminine they are. On the other hand, the same term is sometimes used to describe women who wish to uphold traditional gender roles. Salazar, Goicolea, and Öhman (2016: 315-332) show how discourses can be overlapping and contradictory. In their study, they mapped out young Nicaraguan women’s discourses on femininity. In their situational analysis, they identified three different social worlds and constructions of femininity. The first discursive position challenges traditional unequal gender relations; women’s independence is advocated, yet social relations regulate this autonomy; if the woman’s respectability is endangered men’s control over their partner is accepted. The second position overlaps with the previous in contesting machismo but at the same time portrays femininity as following the traditional standards related to marianismo, such as beauty, respectfulness and service to others. The third position conceptualizes women as rightful actors with a legitimate claim to autonomy regardless of their ‘respectability’ (Salazar et al. 2016: 321-325). Thus, traditional gender roles and images are upheld, renegotiated and contested in multiple ways.

¹⁹⁶ Original in Spanish: Es importante pero no es para bien porque en Nicaragua las mujeres no son muy buenas para la política (sin ser machista).

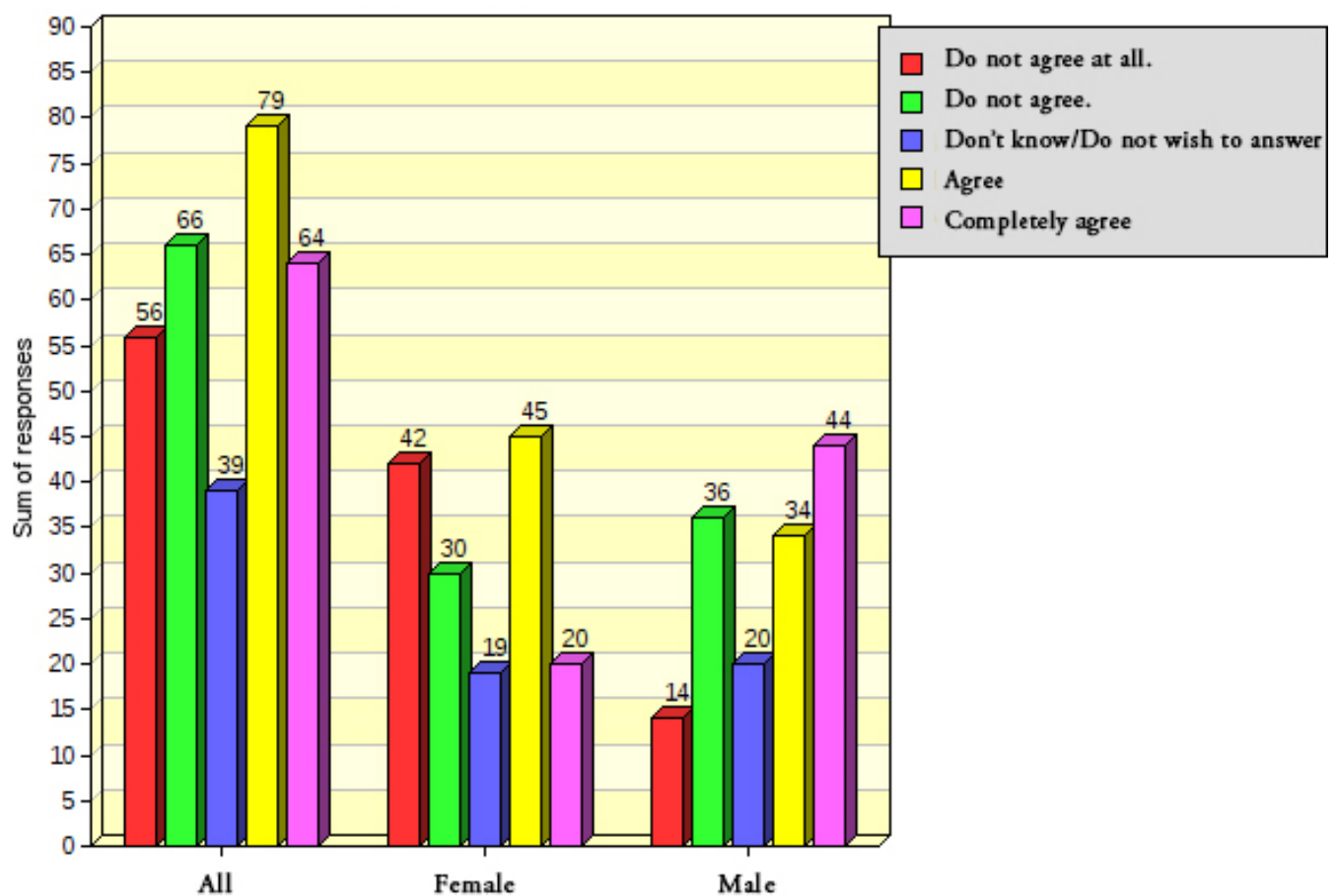


Figure 11. Survey responses: Do you agree with the following statement:
Young men are less macho than old men?

Number of responses: 304

Gender equality has been a part of popular discourse during the entire life of the participants. Changes in Nicaraguan society and pro-gender equality discourse that challenge the patriarchy have in one way or another affected the societal experiences of all young Nicaraguans (Salazar et al. 2016: 316). Yet what often remains neglected in this discussion is the confusing image behind the concept of gender and gender equality: in the light of the conversations I had with the students it became clear that many of them related the term *generó*, (gender), solely with women. Thus, *igualdad de generó*, (gender equality), was quite often understood to mean only the rights of women. Many associated the term gender equality directly with the term feminism, which often has a negative connotation in Nicaraguan society. The grounds for the negative image lie both in history, and in the present-day use of the concept.

During the Nicaraguan revolution, feminism in the Latin American context was seen as a universal principle of equality that set out to eliminate the social differences between the sexes (Molyneux 1998: 219-245). Scholars have also noted that Nicaraguan authorities and politicians often manipulate gender ideologies, particularly motherhood (e.g. Cupples 2010: 8-18).

The 1979 revolution embraced the emancipation of women and supported the women's movements demand legalized access to abortion and birth control (Ibester 2001: 84). However, the message from the movements was contradictory; for example, The Nicaraguan Women's Association (AMNLAE) emphasized motherhood as the most important role for women. Gladys Zalaquett (1983), a member of the AMNLAE writes in the *Barricada* magazine of 1983: "All women are mothers or can become one. And that special characteristic converts them into protagonists with a decisive function in society."¹⁹⁷ This approach excluded many women, and I believe it to be one of the reasons behind the movement's internal disputes and the conflicting images of feminism in the country.

Another reason behind many Nicaraguan women's reluctance to identify themselves as feminists was that even during the revolution the term was often associated with negative, anti-family images. The Latin American media played its part in reinforcing this negative image of feminism by portraying feminists as borderline prostitutes during the 1970s (Chinchilla 1994: 177-197). This might in part explain the need for the women's movement to highlight the importance of motherhood after the revolution. According to Bourdieu (1986), symbolic power is the ability to preserve the established principles and divisions of the social world. These constructions and actions can include classifications and discriminatory meanings in matters such as gender, ethnicity or age and are manifested in words, for example the ability to name a social collective or a group. Thus, it must be kept in mind that constructions such as the ones discussed here are always symbolic struggles of meaning and power, or as Bourdieu (1986: 13) puts it, 'worldmaking' power.

Even though the conceptions discussed above are no longer found in the Nicaraguan media or in official discourses, aspects of the impressions remain and affect the social environment. In the survey questionnaire, I asked the students whether feminism meant equality or more power to women. More

¹⁹⁷ Original in Spanish: 'Toda mujer es madre o puede llegar a serlo. Y esa especial característica la convierte en protagonista de una función decisiva en la sociedad: porque asume la responsabilidad de sujeto principal en la formación de la nueva generación...Desde allí se hace evidente la crucial labor ideológica que la mujer tiene en sus manos.' Gladys Zalaquett (*Barricada* 11 February 1983).

than 60% of the respondents disagreed with the first description, as shown in Table 6. Interestingly, many respondents did not agree with either of the statements. It was clear that for many respondents the term ‘feminism’ means women taking power over men. This is also evident when one takes part on conversations on gender equality in Nicaraguan society; most people associate the term feminism with something negative and gender equality is often interpreted as women overpowering men. However, the fact that many did not agree with either of the statements gives a clear picture of the fact that what feminism means for many is either unclear or they did not wish to define its meaning. It is important to note that a considerable number of students stated they were not sure or did not wish to answer. A slightly larger percentage of them were male respondents. The responses show two things: first, when talking about feminism or gender equality with the students it is by no means clear what the term means; second, the term itself is loaded with assumptions many may not wish to identify with.

Table 6. Survey responses: Meaning of the term ‘feminism’: Does feminism mean equality or more power to women than to men?

F = Female, M= Male

Claim	Agree %	Do not agree %	Not sure %
Feminism means equality.	Total 21%	Total 64.3%	Total 14.7%
Number of responses: 300	F 19%, M 23%	F 68%, M 60%	F 13%, M 17%
Feminism means more power to women than to men.	Total 39.4%	Total 46%	Total 14.6%
	F 40%, M 39%	F 50%, M 42%	F 10%, M 19%

Number of responses: 302

When discussing the meanings of terms and concepts such as machismo or feminism we are not only discussing terminology. Since we construct our world through language, how we refer to concepts, in this case gender, constitute the concept at hand (Weatherall 2002: 80). Our cognition is also linked to the world constructed by words and ideas, thus the words, sentences and expressions we use reflect both the processes of the world around us and the processes of our consciousness (Edwards 1997: 1-10). Thus, how a concept is interpreted, as well as the unwillingness to interpret a concept or idea tells something about these processes. When I went through the interviews and my field notes I noticed that many of the students I had spent time with were uninterested or even bored when someone mentioned

gender or gender equality. Some of the participants were clearly annoyed by the topic. The confusion and a certain tiredness with the topic are somewhat understandable. After several years of discussions and arguments, and the withdrawal of many international donors, the law that forbids abortion in all situations still stands. Meanwhile at the beginning of 2012 the Sandinista government passed the previously mentioned law, *Ley Integral en Contra de la Violencia hacia las Mujeres*, with the intention of abolishing violence against women. The law was both applauded and criticized. Scholars have made assessments about the effectiveness of the new law and noted that women have even felt that the new law has led to an increase in femicide (Luffy et al. 2015: 107-11), and that in addition to legislation that is set out to guarantee women's rights in situations of abuse or violence, other means of action are necessary to ensure legitimacy by state actors (Neumann 2017: 1105-1125).

The new law created a very contradictory impression of the situation of gender equality in Nicaragua: the same government that was denying women the right to make decisions about their own body also highlighted women's rights. As Weatherall (2002: 79) points out: "Power is a pivotal concept for understanding gender relations within a social and political context." The power relations of the country were demonstrated soon after the legislation of the new law: after strong criticism from conservative and religious leaders immediately after the legislation the law was reformed in August 2013. What is of great importance in the assessments of the law is the notion that Neumann (2017: 1105-1125) makes based on her ethnographic fieldwork, namely the importance of specific forms of social capital when seeking equal treatment and justice. As Bourdieu (1986) himself states, resources based on social connections, such as social networks, and the form a certain type of capital takes when it is recognized as legitimate, are strongly related. According to Neumann's (2017: 1120) results, women who had psychological, legal or financial assistance, social connections recognized as valuable capital, were most likely able to pursue their case despite obstacles posed by gendered governance.

Since discussing gender inherently means discussing dominant positions, such as the agent's capital and position in the social world, power struggles and tension are expected. When I discussed with the students, gender, gender equality, and the significance of concepts such as feminism created tension both in the in-depth interviews, and in the survey questionnaire. I argue that one of the reasons behind that tension is the constant symbolic struggle to establish a legitimate vision of the social order as well as the contradictory official discourses. It became clear that some of the survey respondents wished to avoid the theme altogether, as they systematically left all the survey questions relating to gender

unanswered. As stated, many of the students I interviewed contested the traditional images and gender roles offered by Nicaraguan society, yet at the same time some young men felt left aside. One of the male survey respondents left this comment in the free comment segment of a question relating to gender equality: “Women feel they have more and more rights and the new laws give them the reason to say that.”¹⁹⁸

What is important to note is that despite a few comments that clearly support the traditional power relations and gender roles, most of the male students I interviewed wanted to separate themselves from the *macho* image and were very quick to condemn machismo. This is a phenomenon that has also been noted in previous research. Vigoya (2004: 27-29) points out the concurrency of the emergence of the theme of masculinity as a research topic in Latin America and the growth of men’s groups interested in transforming gender relations they find oppressive not only to women but to themselves as well. She also states that the growing presence of men and masculinity in gender studies in the area reflects the powerful shifts in gender relations in Latin America (Vigoya 2004: 28).

Similar phenomena to those described here have been witnessed in other parts of Latin America. Shifts in power relations are likely to create confusion and the renegotiation of power positions. In her study of youth gender activism in Ecuador and Peru, Anna-Britt Coe (2015: 888-913) uses the concept of ‘blurred gender inequalities’ that also describes well the situation in Nicaragua. By blurred gender inequalities Coe refers to processes that simultaneously enable and constrain gender equality. These processes can include progressive and regressive changes in gender relations, societal opposition to feminism, and adult control over youth. Youth activists who participated in Coe’s study felt that adult generations exerted authority and control over younger generations and shaped the extent to which the young were able to construct equal gender relations (Coe 2015: 904). A concrete example of progressive and regressive changes in Nicaraguan society is the two contradictory laws, one banning abortion, one strongly condoning all violence against women, and as noted by Kampwirth (2008: 122-136) the populist politics of Ortega have sent a very clear message of societal, and even institutionalized, opposition to feminism. The control of adults was clear in the responses I received as well. It is usually adults who point out, for example, the suitability of a certain career based on gender, and as discussed previously, it has also been adults who have been heard and have been given opportunities to discuss the new laws.

¹⁹⁸ Original in Spanish: Las mujeres se sienten con más derechos cada vez y las nuevas leyes les dan la razón.

Even though the responses concerning adults mostly dealt with the societal situation of the young in general, some of the respondents also addressed the question of gender equality. One of the survey participants left a comment that criticized the inclusion of the gender of the respondent on the questionnaire form: “I am troubled by this, this should not matter, and this should not make any difference.”¹⁹⁹ I later met with him for an in-depth interview. He stated that he felt that I as an older investigator had assumed that gender is one of the fundamental explanatory factors when it comes to questions relating to students. We had a long conversation during which he explained that he felt that the discussion on gender in Nicaraguan society was far too linear, and failed to include all the aspects behind the current situation, namely the space society offers to both genders and the everyday actions parents and teachers choose to make, or unconsciously make, such as dressing boys and girls in specific colors, or suggesting gendered career paths to young women and young men. Thus, he felt the need to move past gender divisions to a more holistic approach that would take into greater consideration the structures of society. He stated that he felt that society would not give him the chance to do so, because society does not give room for alternative ways of being a man, but focuses solely on the situation of women. This corresponds with Coe’s (2015) findings in Peru and Ecuador. Her results show that youth activists understood men’s situation as adapting to women’s expanded position in the society without having alternative masculinities available to them (Coe 2015: 903).

The dominant discourses on gender in Nicaraguan society and the limited space that society offers for alternative representations of gender have in sum created a base for blurred gender inequalities, as Coe puts it. At the same time, many young men seem to feel excluded, and interpret gender equality and feminism to mean more power for women and less for men. The complex situation and contradictory atmosphere has resulted in feelings of discrimination, and what I call ‘add-in equality’; as we shall see in the following section, the ability to discuss gender and gender equality in a ‘correct manner’ in the ‘correct situations’ is an important building block in a student’s identity as well as being cultural capital, yet the emphasis on equal treatment does not always reach to the private part of life and social interactions.

¹⁹⁹ Original in Spanish: Esto me molesta, no debería significar, ni hacer diferencia.

Feelings of Discrimination and 'Add-in' Equality

Youth studies scholars often pay attention to social exclusion, and many scholars have studied how gender shapes the experiences of it (e.g. Gaetz 2004, Barker 2005, Raffo and Reeves 2000). Gender is also one of the factors that shape the experiences, transitions and the pathways available for the young. The strong discourse on gender equality brought about by international NGOs and development programs has become embedded in the everyday life of young Nicaraguans. Women's movements have also been active in the country throughout the lives of the students who participated in this study, even though their ability to affect society has been shaped by the opportunities given by the state (Isbester 2001: 187-198). Yet, as already mentioned in the previous section, aspects of traditional gender roles are still strongly present, and many of the participants in this study seemed relatively uninterested in the topic of gender and equality. As shown in Figures 12, 13 and 14, the survey respondents rated the lack of opportunities and unemployment as problems that concerned them far more than gender equality, and there was no significant variation between genders in the responses. Even though most survey respondents stated that issues such as unemployment were bigger problems than gender equality, most answered that the lack of equality is a problem. Since this was in contradiction with the uninterested attitude many had shown towards the theme, I began to analyze this further. When I went through my material I noted that there was a certain repeated pattern of responses when it came to gender and equality that could best be described as a habit of having learned to respond in a correct manner to a specific societal question.

According to the conversations I have had with male students and University workers, it seems to be especially easy to be marked as a macho in the academic sphere. Some of the male respondents were very careful with all their answers relating to gender. To give one example, the survey respondents were asked whether they agreed with the statement that in today's society there were more opportunities for men. One of the male participants responded that he did not agree at all and left a comment explaining that his answer did not relate to machismo but to real circumstances: "this doesn't mean machismo; it concerns the truth."²⁰⁰ The young men who participated in my study actively discussed the situation of gender equality in Nicaragua, and interestingly both in the group discussions as well as in the in-depth interviews the male participants were the ones who brought up gender equality. I did not mention the theme, but many participants brought it up themselves. Some of them mentioned gender equality

²⁰⁰ Original in Spanish: Esto no significa machismo; sino que es la verdad.

briefly among other themes when I asked if there were things they would wish to change in society, and some mentioned machismo. This may be partly because these themes were mentioned in the survey they had previously filled in or on account of the interview situation itself, as I was a European female scholar. As Hollands (2003: 157) reminds us, an interview situation is not a matter of observing and analyzing passive objects, but a social relation involving power in which the interviewee can be active in defining both the outcome and the relationship. Thus, some of the interviewees may have felt that issues relating to gender should be brought up, or wished to underline to me that they were aware of problems relating to gender equality. The survey had included only a few questions relating to gender, but the theme repeatedly came up in almost all the interviews I conducted with male students, and also came up in many discussion I observed. I hence argue that gender equality has become an internalized discourse that students have assimilated cognitively as a part of the rules of operation at their universities.

Many students have internalized the strong equality discourse, and automatically answer questions relating to gender and equality in a pre-learned manner. As they operate in the field of universities, they adapt to the specific rules of that field, one of them being correct discourse and opinions on questions concerning gender. In Nicaraguan society, this also relates to questions of class and social mobility. For Bourdieu (1984), the people who possess the highest volume of cultural capital, such as education, determine cultural hegemony in society as cultural capital ensures the social and cultural reproduction of the ruling class. Thus, adapting to these norms and rules and learning the correct expressions also enables one to identify with a specific educated social group, and separate oneself from other groups. Knowledge of the correct norms and terminology regarding discourses on gender enhances social capital, as one is able to create networks and identify with the specific group and thus reinforce one's position in the field. These networks are valuable later in the life course when students position themselves in society and seek to move from studies to the labor market.

One of the most interesting discussions came up in Group 2 when I asked how they would describe their generation. What is important to note here is that the students in Group 2 were the only ones who had not answered the survey prior to the discussion due to some scheduling issues with the university. Thus, they had not seen the questions relating to feminism, machismo or gender equality that I had presented in the survey. I had not mentioned gender in any part of the conversation and had focused mostly on observing the conversation. When the students were discussing social relations and

older generations I asked how they would describe their generation. One of the male students opened the discussion as follows:

The biggest part of the population is young. All right. If we compare with other countries, for example Europe, we see that the population is very adult and the young are merely 16 percent of the population, the youth. And here in Nicaragua the young are more than 70 percent [of the population], and the majority of that women. So for me it would be a generation of others.²⁰¹

The terminology of gender studies was very familiar to the male participants. Many of the concepts, such as otherness, a term still used in gender studies to describe the dominant position of men as Self over women as Other (Cranny-Francis et al. 2003: 14), were actively used when they described Nicaraguan youth and the social system. When the students continued their discussion on generations many of the male students mentioned patriarchy, machismo and traditional gender roles that should be broken down. The female participants, on the other hand, did not comment on this theme.

²⁰¹ *Male I, Group 2*. Original in Spanish: Mayor parte de la población es joven. Ya. Si lo comparamos con otros países, por ejemplo de Europa veamos que toda la población de allí es muy adulta y los jóvenes son apenas un 16 por ciento de la población, la juventud. Y aquí en Nicaragua somos más de 70 por ciento por los jóvenes, y la mayoría compuesto por mujeres. Entonces para mí sería una generación de otras.

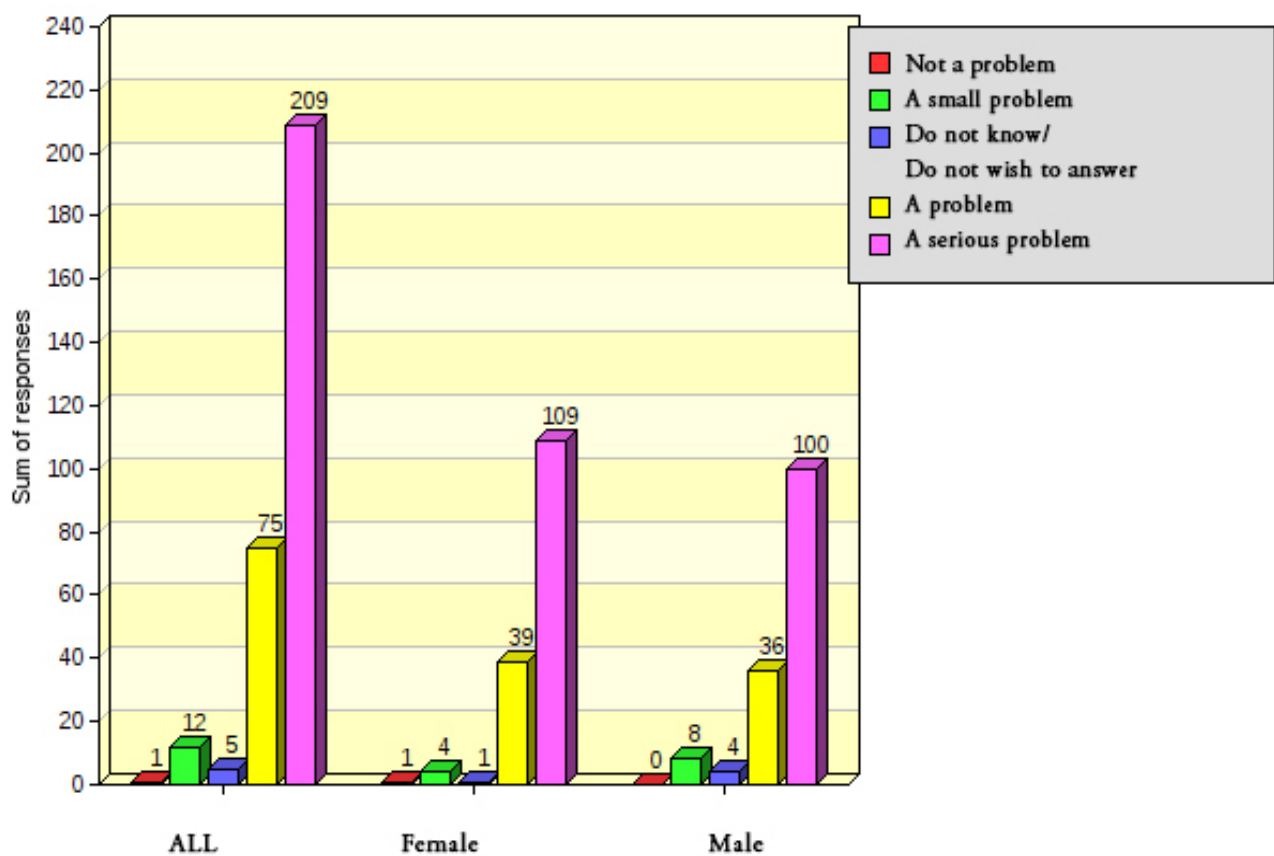


Figure 12. Survey responses: How big a problem is unemployment in Nicaraguan society?

Number of responses: 299

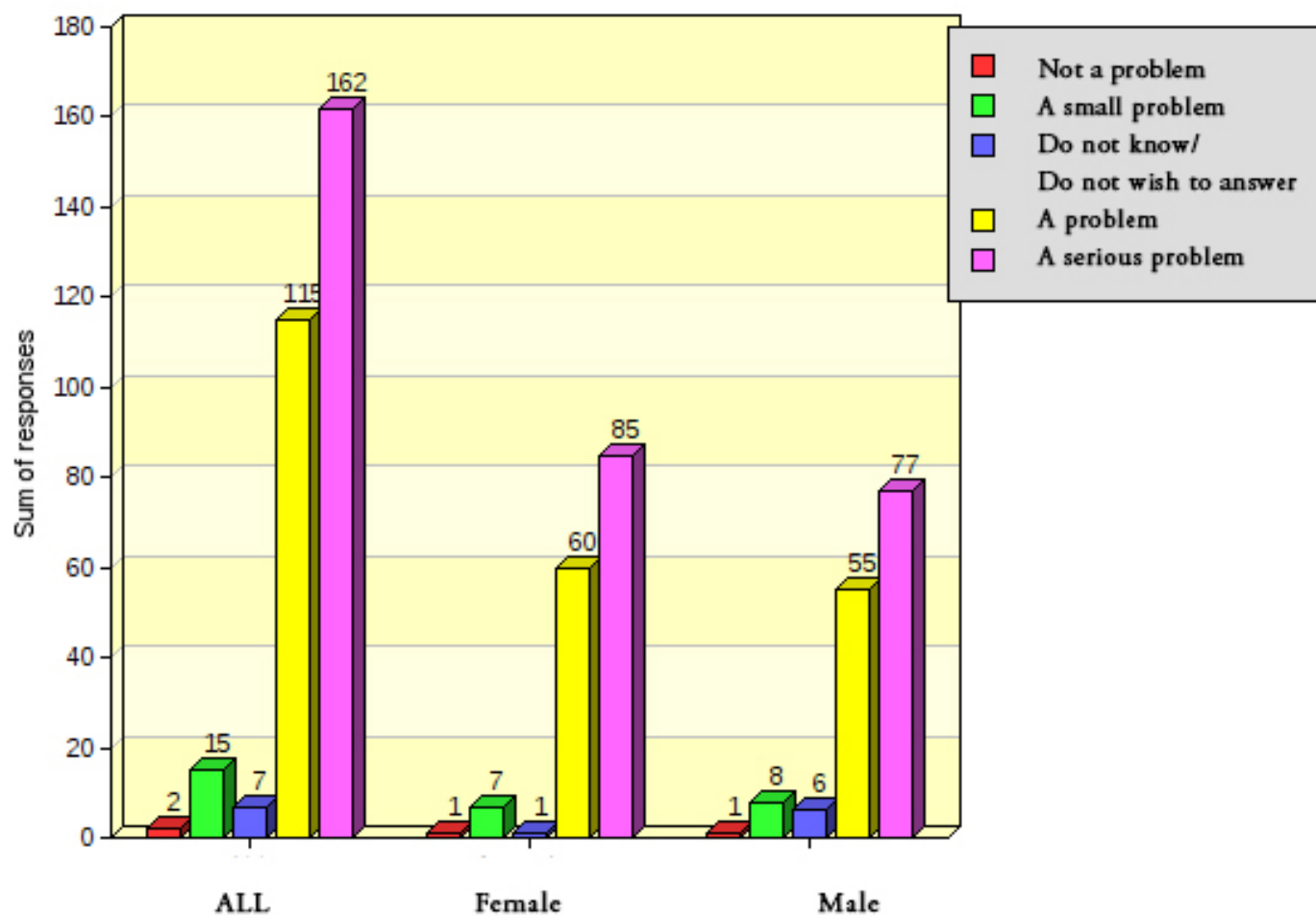


Figure 13. Survey responses: How big a problem is the lack of opportunities in Nicaraguan society?

Number of responses: 302

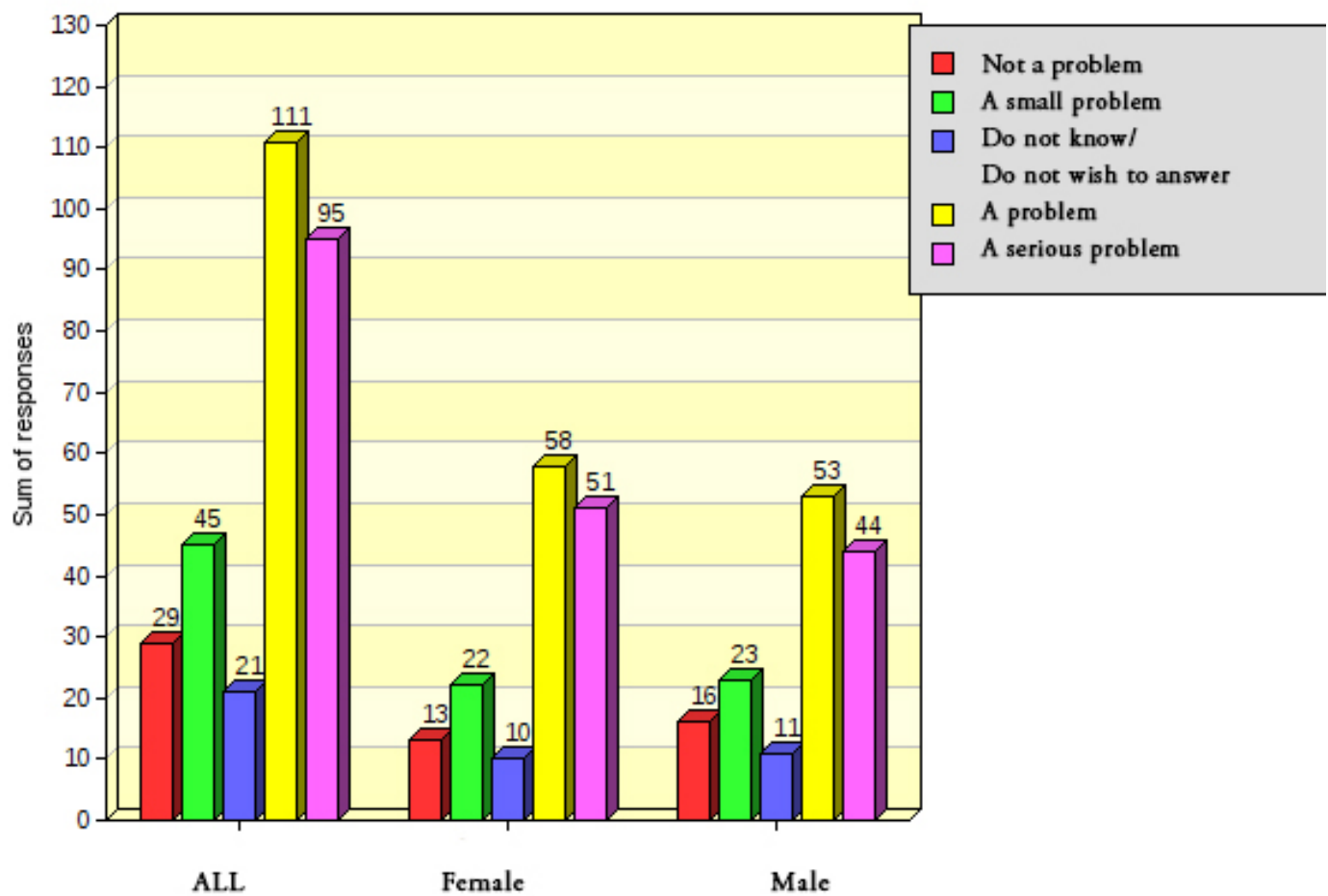


Figure 14. Survey responses: How big a problem is gender inequality in Nicaraguan society?

Number of responses: 301

Correll (2001: 1691-1730) notes that cultural beliefs about gender in society affect the choices young people make early on, not only the jobs they seek to obtain but also the activities they choose prior to career choices. Nicaraguan society, like many other societies, has some very clear unwritten norms and assumptions about what work is suitable for women and what for men. However, as more young women are entering higher level of levels of education, these norms are likely to gradually change. Only two of the female respondents who participated in the individual and group interviews brought up the theme of gender, both times in the context of their career choices. One of them was the civil engineering student whose career choice was discussed in the previous section. She told me she had to strongly defend her career choice, for it was seen as a suitable option for boys but not for girls. Another was a medical student who was concerned about her future career choices, since she felt she needed to choose between specialization in her chosen field of medicine and becoming a mother. A friend of hers had had an unplanned pregnancy, and since Nicaragua law does not allow options in situations such as this, she had missed many classes. This had led the interviewee to ponder on her own options:

In my personal life, I have the difficulty of having a family or making a career, as women we have that little problem, it is not like men don't have it, but in reality it doesn't affect so much their future, that of being fathers, but us as mothers, the simple fact that we carry our child inside us, it complicates things. It's difficult for a woman who gets pregnant to continue her studies. A classmate of mine got pregnant just now, she is really young, it was a mistake, she keeps on studying, but it is not the same, it never is the same. She obviously had to miss the first three semesters because of the pregnancy, and so she already missed like the whole semester.²⁰²

Apart from these two, none of the female participants mentioned any concerns regarding gender or combining family and work, or mentioned gender equality at all. In the survey questionnaire, one female respondent left a comment how machismo persists from generation to generation in Nicaraguan society. She wrote: "Unfortunately in Nicaragua machismo predominates, and has been present from my grandparents to my father and my brothers, which is completely absurd."²⁰³ Apart from these comments the female respondents did not bring up the theme. The few female participants who did

²⁰² *Female G2, born 1986-1992.* Original in Spanish: En lo personal, tengo la dificultad de formar mi familia o formar mi carrera, como mujeres tenemos ese pequeño problema, no es como que no lo tiene hombres, pero realmente no les afecta tanto el futuro de ser padres, pero nosotras como madres por el simple hecho de llevar a nuestro hijo a dentro se nos dificulta. Es difícil que una mujer salga embarazada en su carrera y pueda continuar. Una compañera mía salió embarazada ahora, realmente esta joven, fue un error, sigue estudiando, pero no es igual, nunca es igual. Tuvo que faltar obviamente los tres primeros semestres del embarazo, ya había perdido casi un semestre completo.

²⁰³ *Male B, Group 2.* Original in Spanish: Desgraciadamente en Nicaragua predomina el machismo el cuál se hace presente desde mis abuelos hasta mi padre y hermanos, lo cuál es totalmente absurdo

mention gender equality also talked more about their family or personal life, while the male participants who brought up questions of equality highlighted their knowledge of machismo in society in general, as one of the Group 2 participants commented: “We need to remember that our society in Nicaragua has this macho concept, that’s to say masculine, so it leads to the idea that the man is always right.”²⁰⁴

McNay (1999: 111) notes that feminist political and social theory has aimed to move beyond public-private dualism, since the distinction is implicitly gendered and as such “naturalizes a circumscribed notion of female agency confined to the domestic sphere.” I am aware of this discussion and agree with the statement that constructions such as these may enforce societal and gendered distinctions rather than dismantling them. However, the separation of public and private spheres did appear in my material, and thus I cannot ignore its importance here. I also find it important to underline McNay’s (1999: 111) notion that domestic-public dualism is often implicitly understood as the opposition between public social life and the inferior status of the private, domestic sphere, even though the two could also be considered two forms of sociality. In the light of my material, it seems that gendered distinctions between private and public space remain part of the lives of the young, as most of the male participants mainly discussed the theme in relation to the public sphere of life, while traditional family roles were often not mentioned or contested. Even though most of the male interviewees admitted and underlined the negative effects of machismo, assumptions of who gets heard in the family and why were still seen as self-evident. Some of the male contestants who argued strongly for gender equality in society and in the workplace, and interpreted feminism to mean equality in all situations, still felt it was a normal practice that the opinions of the only son of the family matter more than those of his sisters, which is a very typical situation in Nicaraguan families. When discussing opportunities in society and the private sphere of life, one of the respondents who had strongly defended gender equality told me about his family and the space he had for expressing himself:

In my family I’m always heard. I’m the only son of four kids, so they ask my opinion. At the university too, I’m the vice-president of my [student organization’s] section so I also give my opinion in organizations like Juventud Sandinista. Every time I go they give me an opportunity to express my opinion.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ *Male L, Group 2.* Original in Spanish: Hay que recordar que la mayoría de nuestra sociedad nicaragüense tiene un concepto machista, o sea masculino, y viene que siempre el barón va a tener la razón.

²⁰⁵ *Male H4, born 1986-1992.* Original in Spanish: En mi familia siempre me escuchan. Soy el único varón de cuatro hijos, tengo tres hermanas, piden mi opinión pues. En la universidad también, soy vicepresidente de mi sección entonces también doy mi opinión, en movimientos como Juventud Sandinista. Siempre que voy me dan el espacio para expresar mi opinión.

Later, when we were finalizing the interview, I asked whether he had some additional comments. He replied:

Male H4, born 1986-1992: Well on the survey I found the question on feminism quite interesting. There was a question about whether feminism means equality or more power for women. I have had several conversations with my friends, who are feminists and quite radical, but I myself consider that feminism means equality; you need to give women the space they deserve. In my family there's my father, four women and myself. I was raised with my [female] cousin, my aunt, my grandmother, so they always tell me to respect women.²⁰⁶

Me: Do you think that both sexes have the same opportunities?²⁰⁷

Male H4, born 1986-1992: In many cases no. Coincidentally, just a short while ago there was an internship in the Coca Cola company. It turned out that they wanted the applicants to be male. So they themselves engaged in gender discrimination. A woman could have done that job just as well.²⁰⁸

Thus, this student had internalized the societal discourse of gender equality in the workplace and public life, yet felt it to be normal that in the private sphere of life his opinion was asked for and listened to over the opinions of his female siblings on account of his gender, and he saw no contradiction between these two positions.

My results are similar to Goicolea et al.'s (2014: 399-419) who have researched how young activist men frame alternative masculinities in Ecuador. They conclude that the young activist men's framing of masculinities involves modifying the meaning of existing symbols of machismo. The men they interviewed drew upon a concept of 'the gentlemen,' hence modifying the idea of 'macho' men. The concept of a gentleman was related to the idea that a gentleman opposed violence against women by constructing women as the object of his protection. Goicolea et al. (2014: 414) also point out that "To modify meanings, their framing tapped into a hegemonic discursive opportunity structure: for example,

²⁰⁶ Original in Spanish: Bueno en la encuesta me pareció bastante interesante lo del feminismo. Era una pregunta si el feminismo es igualdad o más poder a las mujeres. He tenido bastantes conversaciones con mis amigas que son feministas y son bien radicales, pero si yo considero que el feminismo es igualdad, hay que dar a la mujer el espacio que merece. Yo soy de una familia en que somos mi papa y yo y después cuatro mujeres. Me crie con mi prima, mi tía mi abuela, entonces siempre me dicen eso que hay que respetar a la mujer.

²⁰⁷ Original in Spanish ¿Te parece que las oportunidades son similares para ambos géneros?

²⁰⁸ Original in Spanish: Muchas veces no. Casualmente hace poco había una pasantía en una empresa de Coca Cola. Resulto ser que ellos pedían que los pasantes fueran barones. Entonces ellos mismos entraron en lo que es discriminación de géneros. Ese trabajo cualquier mujer también lo puede hacer.

‘the gentleman’ emphasized the ‘worthy’ features of machismo including honor and protection, thereby adjusting to regional hegemonic masculinities.” This phenomenon of modifying the meanings and emphasizing the ‘worthy’ features of macho behavior were also present in the responses of the male participants of my study: many highlighted how important it was to give women “the space they deserve” as well as to protect them, often from other men.

While most of the male interviewees highlighted the importance of gender equality, when asked of experiences of discrimination or exclusion, a different phenomenon was brought to light. As discussed in Chapter 7, the survey respondents were asked whether they had suffered from discrimination or exclusion on account of their religion, political ideology, gender, ethnicity, domicile, age, or some other factor, and whether this had occurred in the sphere of family, peer groups, working life, university, or some other space or place. While 11% of the respondents reported discrimination based on political ideology, and 8% based on religion, gender based discrimination was the second least reported, with less than a total of 5% of the respondents having experienced it. Most reported that they had faced gender discrimination at the university. First, I would like to underline the positive fact that only a handful of students stated they had faced discrimination or exclusion based on gender. Interestingly, there was basically no variation between the male and female respondents regarding the experiences of gender discrimination. As shown in Figure 14, seven female respondents and eight male respondents reported they had experiences of gender-based discrimination at the university. This caught my attention when I went through the survey material, and I discussed the question with a few other students and some members of the university faculty. When I asked about the situation, some of the male participants explained that due to fear of being considered a machist, some teachers tended to favor female students over male.

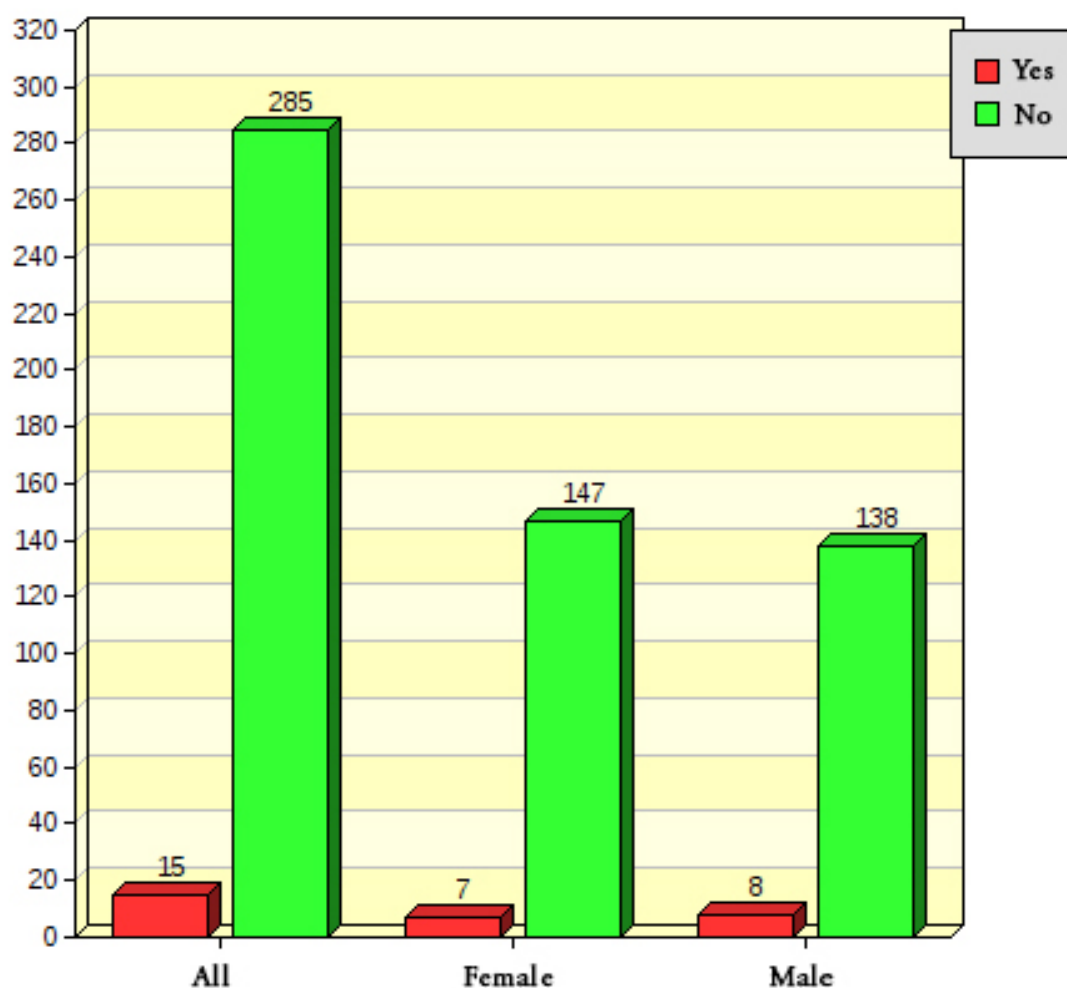


Figure 15. Survey responses: Have you experienced gender-based discrimination or exclusion at the university? Number of responses: 300

I later discussed the topic with a university teacher working at UNAN Managua. He wished to remain anonymous due to concerns about being fired, thus his specific field of expertise or other possible identifiers are not published in this study or anywhere else. He told me that he himself had encountered situations where he had been accused of being a machist when he had graded a male student over a female student. He stated he based his evaluation purely on performance, but said that some of the teachers have been grading female students slightly higher than male students out of fear of being labeled machist or of being accused of gender discrimination. When I asked him how would he resolve the situation he said that he would prefer students to take the exams and return their papers unidentified to avoid these kinds of accusations, but he did not have the resources nor the support of his faculty to do so.

Despite the common idea of academic liberty and freedom of knowledge, universities, or the educational field in general, are not separate from the social universe that surrounds them. Bourdieu (1996a: 130-187) himself has shown that the autonomy of academia is relative, and is constructed within a system of relations that affects the field and the agents in that field.²⁰⁹ Thus, the situation of a society is reflected in the field of the university as well, creating shifts and renegotiations in the norms and rules of that field. It seems that universities, as spaces which foster experiences of gender equality, create a somewhat reverse phenomenon when compared with the rest of society. Hence, the situation of Nicaraguan women, especially in rural areas, remains unequal, yet at the universities some of the male students feel excluded. The male students I interviewed often talked about the unequal situation of women, yet at the same time some of them felt that they themselves were discriminated against due to their gender. Thus, the image of gender equality in Nicaragua, which students have also adopted, does not really correspond with their own everyday experiences. Instead it works as a discourse used in a situation where it is needed to demonstrate a consciousness of the matter, one of these situations possibly being an interview with a female investigator. At the same time, the female students felt most discriminated against due to their gender among their peers in the private sphere of their lives. Thus, the experiences of gender-based discrimination are reversed when it comes to the traditional gendered division between public and private spheres of life and male and female space.

My results show that the conflicting discourses that exist in the society have created a situation in which gender equality has become an 'add-in.' During the last few years, in all the discussions I have observed and the interviews I have conducted with Nicaraguan youth and students, gender equality is often found on the list of important values. However, it is usually mentioned as a mandatory addition, something you are expected to say to prove you are aware of the current global trends and tendencies. The situation of society in general is reflected in the students' opinions and discourses they use at the universities, even though they themselves might have experienced something completely opposite: the contemporary gender relations of the students are divisive with the past. Many students contest the traditional roles, but still hold on to some traditional views on gender roles. At the same time, they feel that society does not support alternative gender roles, since young people are still expected to behave and make choices according to traditional gender images.

²⁰⁹ Bourdieu discussed specifically higher education, namely "the field of the grandes écoles," (the field of universities).

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005: 838) point out that gender definitions are social processes that can construct idealized constitutions of gender norms and images that may not correspond closely to the real life of any particular person. However, these images often reflect some of the ideals of society. Restricted views on gender roles and expectations of gender-based behavior are notable in many everyday conversations in Nicaraguan society, in relation to both masculinity and femininity. One example of this is my previously discussed conversations with students about musical taste. The gender images evoked by reggaeton music, for example, are something that often come up in conversations about youth culture in Nicaragua, and in Latin America in general. These discussions on reggaeton lyrics provide a framed and clear example of how the conversation sometimes focuses solely on the experiences of one gender.

Discussion regarding the gender images of a musical genre favored by many young people tends to focus mainly on the restricted, objectified and degrading role of women in some of the lyrics. Yet, at the same time, it goes unnoticed how limited the role given to men is in the same lyrics. Women are the objects of men's desire, the ones who are supposed to be solely beautiful objects, while men are supposed to be the ultimate machos with money and big cars, providing for their women, and desiring only women. Any other types of masculinity are not allowed, and in some lyrics other expressions of masculinity are straightforwardly ridiculed. It is beyond the scope of this study to go deeper into the theme of music and lyrics, yet the discussion on the lyrics of a music genre favored especially by the young is a very clear and concrete example of how gendered experiences and restricted images are sometimes framed to label or empower solely one gender, even though restricted roles and images affect both genders. I discuss this further in the next section.

Spaces and Places of Gender Reworked: Theoretical Considerations

During one of my visits to Nicaragua in 2010, I traveled to Bluefields, the capital of the autonomous Región Autónoma de la Costa Caribe Sur (RACS). Most tourists take a plane from Managua directly to the idyllic Corn Islands, and many locals if they have the money prefer to travel to Bluefields by air, since the road is long. A Managuan friend of mine accompanied me on my journey that began on a Monday morning from Mercado Ivan Montenegro in Managua. The estimated six-hour bus ride to El Rama, the last stop before the jungle that separates the autonomous region from the pacific part of Nicaragua, took closer to 9 hours, since the journey included dropping off locals at small villages. As we approached our destination it was getting dark, and there was only a handful of travelers left. We were supposed to continue to Bluefields by *panga*, a motorboat ride through Rio Escondido, but since we arrived late, the last panga of the day had already left. I thus had an opportunity to explore El Rama.



Picture 11. The quiet streets of El Rama, 2010.

To my surprise the city was very quiet and quite empty. After a while I noticed that nearly all the people I saw were young men, indeed quite a large number of young men considering how small the town was. All of them wore rubber boots and work clothes. It turned out that due to its riverside location the settlement served mainly as a port, and the young men were workers from different parts of the surrounding areas. When the canal project with China was planned a few years later, there was talk of Chinese workers taking over jobs on the river as well. Whether this came true or not, I don't know, but as I went through my material for this chapter I remembered the young men in El Rama and how differently the same global and local changes affect young people in different social positions and locations. These changes and transitions are also gendered.

As discussed in the previous sections, the students who participated in this study had lived through complex societal processes and transformations in gender relations. Thus, they positioned themselves in the society and constructed their identities within these changes and transitions. Hall (1996: 1-17) argues that identities are fluid positions produced in specific historical and institutional sites and are affected by power, thus making identities products that mark difference and exclusion. According to Hall (1996: 1-17), despite the changing nature of identity positions, identifications based on gender or race tend to be more permanent. Thus, gender is an important factor when discussing societal relations and the experiences of the young. Over the last few years, research on gender identities and discourses on gender concerning young Nicaraguans have focused strongly on intimate partner violence and sexual abuse toward women, or on reproductive health.²¹⁰ Academic discussion on young masculinities in Nicaragua tends to focus either on these previously mentioned themes or on gang membership and other problems related to social exclusion.²¹¹ Without contesting the obvious importance of research into these topics, I nevertheless wish to underline that gender and discourses of gender also affect the choices and transitions of the young in multiple ways, as does the capital available for them when they make choices and choose pathways.

Bourdieu has discussed gender both in *Masculine Domination* (2001) and in briefer gender analyses in his prior work.²¹² Bourdieu's work on fields, capital and habitus has also been used by gender studies scholars to theorize the existence of multiple dominant masculinities (Coles 2009: 30-44) and in the development of the concept of emotional capital (Reay 2004: 57-74). What is of prime importance in

²¹⁰ See e.g. Torres et al. 2012, Salazar and Öhman 2015, Salazar et al. 2016.

²¹¹ See e.g. Obando et al. 2011

²¹² For an introduction to Bourdieu's analysis of gender, see e.g. Fowler 2003.

this study, however, is Bourdieu's insight into different forms of capital and habitus. According to Bourdieu (1977, 1984), habitus is a durable, transposable disposition that functions beyond the level of language and consciousness, thus allowing individuals to navigate through situations that require flexibility and improvisation. Sweetman (2003: 528-549) argues that due to the various social and cultural shifts people undergo during their life, the transformation of habitus is becoming increasingly commonplace. Thus, changes in gender power structures and positions are also navigated through habitus. Coles (2009: 30-44) shows that the concept of habitus allows masculinity to be both transposable and adaptable, and works to describe how multiple masculinities are negotiated in changing everyday situations; some men choose to support hegemonic masculinity, some reject it, while their positions in the field depend on the resources available and their relation to others.

According to Skeggs (1997), gender, class and race are important when discussing forms of capital since they provide the relations in which capital comes to be organized and valued, and as such affect the resources available to one. Skeggs (1997: 8-9) argues that when we are born we enter an inherited social space where we occupy gender- (and class- and race-) associated social positions that affect our ability to acquire of capital, since:

Each kind of capital can only exist in the interrelationships of social positions; they bring with them access to or limitation on which capitals are available to certain positions. They become gendered through being lived, through circulation, just as they become classed, raced and sexed: they become simultaneously processed.

Tolonen (2005: 343-361) has noted in her study on young people in Finland that social and cultural capital was used differently in different life situations but also according to gender. In the light of my results, it is clear that Nicaraguan society is still very class based and patriarchal, and thus gender is bound to affect how social and cultural capitals are lived. Capital is indeed also organized through gender, and social locations inevitably influence our ability to use capital.

The fact that gender affects social positions was clearly demonstrated in my material: even though most the male interviewees wished to separate themselves from traditional macho images and endorsed gender equality, being a man naturally provided some of them with a position in which they were always the first to be heard in the family. Skeggs (1997: 9) even argues that masculinity is a normalized

form of cultural capital. Whether masculinity should be seen as a form of cultural capital, in the sense that Bourdieu framed cultural capital, or as a form of hereditary social capital, is an interesting point of discussion. The discussion on the theme is beyond the scope of this dissertation, though this is an interesting point for further analysis.

At this point it is important to note that we are not discussing one single form of masculinity, and social positions differ within masculinities just as they do with femininity. As discussed previously, Nicaraguan society upholds certain expectations of the 'correct' kind of femininity, and as Salazar et al. (2016: 315-332) show, young Nicaraguan women construct femininity in multiple ways. Salazar and Öhman (2015: 131-149) have also identified a discourse where young Nicaraguan men problematize traditional power relations, and challenge the idea of men's control over women as a principle defining manhood, as did many of the male students who participated in this study. Yet, Salazar and Öhman (2015: 131-149) also identified other discursive positions that accepted or only partially rejected the dominance of men over women. Thus, in the light of previous research and my results it becomes clear that power relations and attitudes regarding gender are shifting among young Nicaraguans. Some embrace the pro-gender equality stance while others resist it. Renegotiations of positions such as these also create in-between stances, as shown in my results, as some of the male participants modified their position depending on the field and some felt excluded.

The topic of young men's societal exclusion is an ongoing discussion in other parts of the globe as well, sometimes referred to as the crisis of masculinity in academic research. Even though this 'crisis' has been a widely-discussed topic both in gender and youth studies, it is not always clearly defined, as Edwards (2006: 7) points out. Scholars first brought the concept to more general attention during the twentieth century with the rise of the women's movement in Western countries (Leung and Chan 2012: 214-233). The 'crisis' is usually strongly related to the transformation of patriarchal power, such as changes in the patterns of work and family life (Connell 2005: 84-90). This is especially the case for young men with the current labor market transitions, where manufacturing jobs are being relocated to non-Western and developing areas (Nayak and Kehily 2008: 49). In Latin America, the 'crisis' is seen to emerge from complex social and economic changes in urbanization, the incorporation of a large number of women into the labor market, and the significant impact of women on diverse social movements (Vigoya 2004: 29). The increased number of women entering universities is one more addition to this list. The situation described by Vigoya can be seen through the lens of the masculinity

crisis: complex historical circumstances have both strengthened and weakened the hegemony of masculinity in Nicaraguan society, leaving young men in a situation where they are uncertain of their role. Traditional gender roles are falling apart, and new ones are yet to be found.

There is, however, another way to look at the situation. As Nayak and Kehily (2008: 39) point out, the idea that young masculinities are in crisis is a compelling narrative, but as with all dominant paradigms, we should subject it to analytic scrutiny. I would agree with this point of view. I argue that, in the light of my results, in Nicaragua the discussion should not revolve around a possible crisis of young masculinities, since conflicting discourses and shifts in power relations affect both young men and women. Rather, we should see the situation as several processes of transformation where the places and spaces of gender are continuously reworked. Also, in the light of Coles's (2009: 30-44) theorization of the existence of multiple dominant masculinities, as well as my own results, we should keep in mind that masculinities and femininities can be reworked in multiple ways through habitus within a specific field and subfields, thus the power relations between and within genders are fluid and transformed by social situations. The process itself may include crisis-like phases, but in general I believe that the discussion should move towards a more holistic approach when studying gender and youth in Nicaragua, and in Latin America in general. According to the ethnographic observations of Nayak and Kehily, one of the primary means through which young women and men define themselves is through and against one another (Nayak and Kehily 2008: 39). Thus, all research on youth should incorporate work on masculinities and femininities.

Even though Latin American youth studies has had almost a century-long history, the scope of the research remains somewhat restricted. As Oliart and Feixa (2012: 336) point out, funding available for independent academic work in Latin America is restricted and funding sources are often tied to development goals. Through the lens of development goals the young of a very heterogeneous region look alarmingly similar, as does the discussion of youth and gender. Studies on gender and gender equality often concentrate on young activists and political movements or on the themes of violence and exclusion. This is valuable and intriguing research, since the region has a long history of political mobilization, and violence against women as well as gang-related issues are very real problems in Nicaraguan society. But, without contesting the value of research on gender activist and women's movements, since many young people are not interested in taking part in any sorts of movements I find it extremely important to give a voice to those who do not consider themselves to be activists. Most of

the students who participated in this study were not active in any political or societal movements, nor had they had issues with gang members or exclusion. Since they are also young Nicaraguans, how they construct and experience gender is of importance when trying to decipher the puzzle of young femininities and masculinities in Nicaragua. Most importantly, as Salazar et al. (2016: 316) point out, most theoretical contributions to questions such as constructions of womanhood and gender within economic and social changes have been conducted in high income countries, and thus more research that highlights the experiences of the young in the global south is needed.

As the results of this study show, Nicaraguan students are looking for a balance between the traditional and the new, and the discussion should not just be about gender hierarchies, it should also be about the resources upholding these hierarchies in different fields. In the light of my results and the discussion in this section, I argue that youth studies in Latin America and Nicaragua would benefit from a further analysis of cultural and social capital in the light of gender and locality, as we seek to understand the complex realities of the young. As my results show, constructions of gender and discourses on gender and equality are not merely building blocks of identity they are also recognized capital in specific social situations. Thus, concepts such as class and gender are still highly relevant when researching the experiences of the young.

V CONCLUSIONS

11. *Lives of the Young Theorized*

*Hemos sido colocados en un centro mediterráneo: en el ombligo del nuevo mundo. En Nicaragua se traslapan y se juntan – y conviven – la flora y la fauna propias del Norte América y la flora y la fauna del Sur América.
El primer diálogo lo entabla la naturaleza.*²¹³

Pablo Antonio Cuadra, El Nicaragüense

Living in a Globalized Locality

Youth and being young in today's societies is an intriguing yet challenging theme. When we discuss the meaning of the phase we call 'youth' we also categorize the lives of real people living in real societies. Thus, with the challenge comes a certain responsibility. Wyn and White (1997: 11) note that: "youth is a relational concept because it exists and has meaning largely in relation to the concept of adulthood." Yet, it is often adults who specify these relations. The aim of this study was to shed light on a previously unstudied subject: the social experiences of Nicaraguan university students. The ethnographic material collected for this study is, to date, the most comprehensive research material on the university-level students of the country, yet it is only one piece of a puzzle that deserves more attention in the future. My main goal was to produce new information on youth and specifically young students in Nicaragua, since as the discussion throughout this study shows, the existing research gives a somewhat limited image of the lives of the young Nicaraguans. I have tried to voice the experiences of the students as transparently as I can, but having said that, I am sure that at least some of them would interpret the material collected and the information provided in this study differently than I have. Yet, this study

²¹³ We have been placed in a Mediterranean center: in the navel of the new world. In Nicaragua, the flora and fauna of North America and the flora and fauna of South America overlap and unite – and cohabit. Nature initiated the first dialog.

opens at least one new window through which we can observe the lives of the students who participated in my research.

Nicaragua is a small country with a complex history, a complexity that is reflected in its society on many levels. The political divisions that have their roots far back in history affect the lives of the young Nicaraguans of today both in their studies as well as during labor market transitions. The polarization of Nicaraguan society was also reflected in my material, as some of the students embraced the governing party, some opposed it, and some simply did not want to discuss the situation at all. Yet, as the results of this study show, the political system and the power structures of the society affect the choices the students can make in their everyday lives, since the social systems of the students are constructed within the social fields in which they interact on a daily basis. The most typical social fields I have identified in this study included the university, family, peer groups, and youth organizations. I also identified specific subfields that overlap with the fields mentioned. These included church activities, faculty-specific student's groups and (political) student and youth organizations, namely the UNEN and Juventud Sandinista. The identification of the subfields of the UNEN and Juventud Sandinista is an important result of this study. My material shows how the politicization of a student's organization that exercises power both in the field of the university as well as in society creates both networks and exclusion in the academic sphere that extends all the way to the students' transition to the labor market. This politicization also divides students within their temporary community, the university.

As discussed in this study, global events, foreign interference and power struggles have always played a role in Nicaraguan society throughout the history of the country. In the lives of the young the global world is most evident where opportunities are concerned. Many of the students had thought about the opportunities available at home and abroad, and most of them knew their education might not guarantee them access to the opportunities many other young people had access to in other countries. Scholars have discussed and theorized the changing situation of the world, and the position of young people in a global world from multiple perspectives. To name a few, Held and McGrew (2002: 1) point out that transcontinental flows and patterns of social interaction have created complex forms of interconnectedness, Schlegel (2000: 71) discusses 'global youth culture,' and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2009) refer to 'global generations.'

Even though global events were present in the lives of the students who participated in this study, local interactions were those that mattered most in their everyday lives. One of the central findings of this study is the importance of local networks and the sense of locality in the lives of the students. Despite increased globalization and the structural obstacles in Nicaraguan society most of the students who participated in this study were not planning to leave their country, nor were particularly interested in pursuing objectives or goals outside of their own local communities. Local networks and communities, such as peer groups, religious communities and family ties, are extremely important in the lives of the students, as they enhance social capital and provide a sense of belonging and agency. Being a Nicaraguan was of great value to all the students who participated in this study. On the other hand, being a young Nicaraguan was both a responsibility, as well as an opportunity. Despite their study path, political affiliations or any other variable, the students who participated in this study valued family, and their individual goals were very much tied to the well-being of their family.

According to Bourdieu, social relations of power structure social relations between actors. Our habitus enables us to orientate ourselves in these different social situations (Bourdieu 1984). Another important result of this study is the notion of the ability of the young to move between different frameworks of global and local, and academic and leisure time. As they move from one framework to another, the rules of the specific social situations change. Many of the students adapted easily to different social situations, thus they can be seen as having multiple habituses as Virtanen (2007: 270-275) puts it in the case of Manchineri in Brazil, or transformations of habitus as Sweetman (2003: 528-549) suggests in his analysis of habitual reflexivity. The importance of social capital was particularly highlighted in my material where movement within different social frameworks and rule sets was concerned. According to my results, the students who had most social capital from peer groups seemed to be the ones who were able to move between different frameworks with most ease. As Weller (2007: 107-126) points out, friendships can provide social capital in the form of networks and emotional resources. Thus, the importance of social capital created in peer group activities is of special interest when researching the resources of the young. Capital can also be used to make distinctions, specifically with cultural capital, such as the ability to speak in a correct manner and about the right kind of interests, for example an interest in music. Such factors proved to be important building blocks in the students' identity formation. My material shows that as the students enter the field of university they also unconsciously adapt to specific rules: for example, correct language, proactivity, and the ability to behave in a manner expected from a student were vital norms when operating in the field of the university.

As shown in this study, linguistic competence was important for many of the students. Both the ability to speak in a correct manner in specific situations as well as the themes a student should be able to discuss were mentioned in the interviews, and when I observed the students in different social situations it became clear that their positions as students was both constructed and re-enforced through language. Conversations, and speech in general are social practices that also relate to power (see Bourdieu and Thompson 1991). Many of the students who participated in this study made a distinction between themselves and other young people who did not study, both in expressing specific tastes in music, literature or television programs but also in their linguistic competence. Many of the students were also very aware of the importance of language and the position the correct use of language gave them. As Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992: 146) state: “access to legitimate language is quite unequal” and every day social interactions reveal these inequalities in linguistic competence.

As discussed in this study, some youth studies scholars have sought to move away from the idea of transitions, and the concept has met with criticism as scholars have begun to move from a transition paradigm to a generation paradigm (Wyn and Woodman 2006: 495-514), and underlined that due to social changes young people’s transitions are neither linear nor predictable (see e.g. Stephen and Squires 2003). As already stated in this study, I do not consider transitions to be either linear or predictable. Transitions do exist, however, and are moreover considered important by the young themselves. My material clearly demonstrates both the conceptual value of transitions in youth research as well as the symbolic value of transitions as rites of passage in the lives of the young. According to my results, despite global changes local-level transitions are still important as a concept. In this study, I discussed specifically the transition from studies to work and completing studies. Even though I agree that we should not consider transitions to be linear, as they are complex, fragmented and sometimes even reversible, nevertheless they remain a part of the life course and are of special significance for the young. The transitions from school to work, for example, are a part of the experiences that many young people face, whether we as youth studies scholars like it or not.

An important result of this study is the notion of the meaning attached to studies and graduation. My results highlighted the importance of studies as a meaningful rite of passage that is not solely related to labor market integration. When students completed their studies their social position changed both within the family unit and within society. This change was not related to finding steady employment or enhancing economic capital, but to becoming a fully recognized adult member in society and as well as

transitioning from the status of a child to the status of an adult within the family unit. Thus, studying, becoming a professional, as the students themselves expressed it, is a transitional rite of changing one's position both in society and within the family or community, and as such is of great importance for the young.

The situation of the young in what I call a globalized locality is a two-way challenge: on the local level, for the society in which the young live, the challenge is to create policies that accommodate young people who are growing up in a very complex and interconnected world. On an academic level the challenge is to find ways to theorize young people in very different and yet partly very similar circumstances without losing the capacity to remain sensitive to the experiences of the young themselves. As my results show, some of the new suggestions in the field of youth studies, such as Arnett's (2004) concept of 'emerging adulthood' ignore the fact that even if scholars theorizing the social universe were willing to embrace such a new life phase, young people are not necessarily interested in embracing it. As researchers seek to find new ways of interpreting, researching and theorizing the experiences of the young, young people themselves live their lives within the structures of their local society and the world at large. In the lives of the young the large-scale social transformation researchers have highlighted may not be so influential as the norms and rules of the local community they live in. As summarized here, my material clearly shows the importance of locality and transitions. According to my results, class and gender are also highly relevant in the lives of the young and thus should not be overlooked, as summarized in the next section.

Class, Gender and Generation: Do They Matter?

Research on youth does not exist without considerations of temporality and change, since we are discussing a phase of life socially constructed within the life course. As discussed in this study, global changes and increased globalization have challenged youth studies scholars to find new ways of theorizing and researching the experiences of the young. One of these being the revived interest in the concept of sociological generations. Wyn and Woodman (2006: 495-514) have argued that a generational approach is needed to move beyond the concept of youth in transition. My results show that transitions remain important in the lives of the young, and I argue that we should not focus on moving beyond the idea of transitions, but should approach transitions in a more reflexive way. Transitions are often important rites for the young, and even though they can be complex, reversible and fluid, they are also real experiences for the young.

The concept of generation also comes up in discussions on global youth and global generations, as proposed, for example, by Beck and Beck-Gersnheim (2009: 25-36) and Edmund and Turner (2005: 559-557). I agree that questions of global trends, influences and especially global opportunities are important when it comes to discussing the lives of the young, but in the light of my results I wish to stress the importance of locality. Many young people live their lives in local communities, and as shown in this study are very committed to their own community. Yet, we must take into account the fact that global changes affect the young in different geographical locations very differently. Thus, in the light of my results I agree with Nayak (2003:3-5) in that place and geography matter more than ever in the sense that local cultures play an important role and provide a sense of agency in the lives of the young when facing global changes. Despite the importance of locality, research and analysis of young people and global generations can bring us new information on the lives of the young in an increasingly interconnected world. However, we need to keep in mind that when constructing concepts such as global generation, digital generation, or generation Y²¹⁴, we cannot automatically include young people living outside Europe, North America and Australia, or even worse, exclude them completely from the conversation.

²¹⁴ Generation Y refers to birth cohorts from early 1980s as starting birth years and the mid-1990s to early 2000s as ending birth years, and is often used in the United States and Europe.

What is important to keep in mind is that transition and generation perspectives can complement each other, as Roberts (2005: 265) points out: “Inviting youth researchers to choose between transition and generation is like insisting that diners choose either fish or chips. The transition and generation perspectives are not mutually exclusive: they can be used complementarily.” In the case of Nicaragua, this would be like choosing either the rice or the beans in a gallo pinto, which to any Nicaraguan would sound simply silly.

Since this study deals with youth, age is obviously a central matter. What we assume to be included in youth, what society expects of the young, and how research and the media portrays young people does not always correspond with what the young themselves include in their experience of being young. As stated in this study, the existing earlier research on Nicaraguan youth creates a very limited picture of the country’s young people. The students who participated in this research were focused, ambitious and very committed to their studies, to their families and to building their home country. Even though the narratives of young people in Nicaraguan society place a considerable amount of responsibility on the young, my material did not show any particular conflict related to generations, or age. When the students critiqued the older generations, the critique was directed towards the political power structures of the nation, not towards the entire revolution era generation.

As discussed earlier, Nicaragua is still very much a class society and the current power relations of the country have their roots in the 1979 revolution. The economic means of some are excessive in comparison to others, and despite the public university system, studying is still impossible for many due to their economic circumstances. Class-based inequalities also become evident when it comes to personal networks: many services in Nicaragua are somewhat based on personal relations or favors. Thus, those who have either the economic means to pay for services or the necessary networks and connections are in many ways the ones who get ahead in society. As discussed in this study, the structural obstacles that students face in Nicaraguan society are related both to economic means and to political affiliations. Thus, the social capital attained from political youth organizations is in some cases one way of overcoming the lack of economic means or a personal network. However, not everyone wishes to participate in such organizations.

My results show that questions of social mobility and class are still relevant today. Many of the participants in this study came from poor conditions and aimed to gain a better living both for

themselves and for their family. In the light of this, I argue that class is very much a relevant concept in youth studies. Apart from a better economic situation, being a student and learning to operate within the specific rules of the university also produced the cultural capital needed to advance in society. Interestingly, my results show that knowledge of the correct norms and terminology regarding gender and gender equality was one of the central cognitively adapted rules.

Gender relations in Nicaraguan society relate closely to institutional power. As discussed in this study, the official discourses of gender equality and women's right are very contradictory. The complex images and messages on gender, equality and women's rights have created a situation that Coe (2015: 888-913) very accurately describes as blurred gender equalities, processes that simultaneously enable and constrain gender equality. The two contradictory laws, one banning abortion and one condoning all violence against women, as well as the institutionalization of opposition to feminism by Ortega's politics and adults' control over young people's masculinities and femininities became evident in the results of this study.

The situation has also created a phenomenon that I in this study have called 'add-in equality,' as gender equality has become an 'add-in' in the list of important values, something you are supposed to mention and support to be able to play by the rules of specific fields and social situations. My results show that male students in particular have internalized the pro-gender equality discourse as part of their vocabulary and as a building block in their positions as students. On the other hand, many of the traditional power relations within the family were not recognized as problems, and many male students' opinions were closer to *caballerismo* than to pro-gender equality. At the same time, some of the male participants felt excluded, and did not relate the conversation on gender equality to themselves, but solely to women. Some of them also expressed the idea that society does not support alternative masculinities and felt very restricted by the images and expectations placed upon them. The results of this study correspond to the results of other studies discussing gender equality among the young in Latin America (Coe 2015, Salazar et al. 2016, Vigoya 2004) and highlight the importance of including the experiences of both young women and young men when discussing questions related to gender and equality. As shown in this study, the dominant discourses of gender in Nicaraguan society and the limited space that society offers for alternative representations of gender have created a base for such blurred gender equalities, as described by Coe (2015), namely processes that simultaneously enable and constrain gender equality.

Since, as Correll (2001: 1691-1730) notes, the cultural beliefs about gender in society influence the choices that young people make, it is extremely important to consider the meanings attached to the official terms used both at the institutional level as well as in academic research and daily life. What is extremely important in discussions on gender is the complex meanings of the terms we commonly use. My results show that when we discuss gender and gender equality we should not assume that the young understand the terms in the same way as youth studies scholars do. As shown in this study, for many of the participants in this study, concepts such as gender equality or feminism were by no means simple, and the meanings attached to each concept varied considerably. For many, the term 'gender' related solely to women, and thus 'gender equality' was interpreted solely as women's rights. In the light of my results, gender and class remain extremely important concepts when researching the experiences of the young in societies such as Nicaragua. What is clearly of importance is to recognize the shifting power relations and to remain receptive to how and why the young renegotiate these relations, since the processes are not always the same as we expect them to be. As far as capital is concerned, the relation between capital and gender is one of the questions that should clearly be investigated in future studies. I discuss this further in the next chapter.

12. Mapping Out Future Research

*Sólo éste ahora es mío
este momento
el pasado escapó
y no vislumbro el rostro
del futuro.²¹⁵*

Claribel Alegría

On Capital: Resources in an Interconnected World

As discussed in this study, the concept of social capital has been particularly useful in the field of youth studies. However, the framing of the concept has been somewhat unclear as some scholars have used the concept as presented by Coleman (1988), and some as adopted by Bourdieu. In this study, I applied Bourdieu's concept of capital, a theory that has been widely discussed, used and critiqued. Despite this criticism, I argue that it holds value for youth studies scholars when we navigate the realities of the young. Since Bourdieu's analysis includes more than one type of capital, it allows a researcher to conceptualize social encounters in a more comprehensive way. We are not merely dealing with economic means or knowledge and skills acquired from parents or education, but with cultural and social capital. Social capital in particular can be accumulated through multiple interactions and social networks that can later be transformed into economic capital.

Even though Bourdieu has been criticized for basing his theory predominantly on economic capital (see Smith and Kulynych 2002), I argue that his insights provide us with an opportunity to consider other aspects that are important in what makes life meaningful, namely social connections and networks that provide a sense of belonging and agency. The results of this study clearly demonstrate the relevance of the concept of capital in researches conducted among the young. The importance of different types of capital, specifically cultural and social capital in the lives of the students, was apparent in my material.

²¹⁵ Only this moment is mine. This moment. The past escaped and did not glimpse the face of the future.

Due to the relative lack of economic capital, the importance of social networks, such as local communities, and the possibility of enhancing cultural capital through studies are of major importance in the lives of the students who participated in this study.

As discussed previously, social capital proved to be particularly important in the lives of the students, both as local social networks, as well as in terms of the social capital produced in peer groups. However, the resources available for a person differ according to time and place, and the change in time and new spaces and places should be taken into account in future research. This study showed that basically all the participants were in one way or another using Internet-based services and social media. Social capital production in the virtual world, which some scholars have referred to as virtual capital (e.g. Hoff 2006, Mathwick et al. 2008, McEwan and Sobre-Denton 2011), is a topic that would be entitled to more attention among youth studies scholars, as it holds special importance when discussing social exclusion and differentiation in societies such as Nicaragua. As we discuss social media, the Internet, and virtual space and communities in the lives of the young, we very often base our discussion and images on the lives of young people who have daily access to the Internet, and the necessary skills to use the services available.

As discussed in this study, social media is a widely researched topic among youth studies scholars. However, where Latin American youth is concerned, the perspectives have remained limited, and in the case of Nicaragua the research is almost non-existent. Many studies relating to social media and youth in Latin America tend to focus on social and political protest, and how and why and under what conditions social media platforms are used as a means for protest (see e.g. Valenzuela 2013, 2014, Velasquez and LaRose 2015). Latin American scholars have also focused on the positive effects of digital communication technologies (e.g. Martín-Barbero 1996, 2002) and generational aspects of digital communication (e.g. Portillo et al. 2012). Age is often taken as an indicator of ability and interest in using these new digital services, and some scholars see being under 30 years as a predicator of social media use (e.g. Portillo et al. 2012, Valenzuela 2013). Yet, according to my material about Nicaragua, access to Internet services, and the knowledge of how to use social media are also indicators of local inequalities. Age alone does not predict an ability to use the Internet or social media. Even though the students in this study were all able to use the Internet on a daily basis, partly due to their student status, my fieldwork material clearly shows that this is not the case with many Nicaraguan young people.

Since Nicaragua is a class-based society, where both economic and cultural capital affect the opportunities that the young have for gaining access and skills related to digital services, we must remember that access to the Internet and the skills and knowledge needed to use Internet-based services are in many parts of the globe also indicators of local inequalities, not just new windows of opportunity. As this study points out, generalizations such as ‘the digital generation’ or ‘digital natives’ exclude many young people and should be used with care. What should also be kept in mind is that the Internet does not moderate inequalities. As Boyd (2014: 159) points out; “Many of the social divisions that exist in the offline world have been replicated, and even in some cases amplified, online.” Hence, research on the effects of access to and the ability to use the Internet and social media, as well as studies on the reproduction of both social capital and social divisions online, should be topics of further interest for youth studies scholars.

Gender relations are currently going through complex changes both in Nicaragua and in Latin America in general. The young in particular are modifying the meanings of traditional gender roles, and hence questions relating to gender are extremely relevant when discussing the social capital of the young. My material shows that gender and class are still central concepts in the lives of the young. Since social capital proved to be very important in the lives of the students, I argue that further investigation on how capital is organized through gender locations would be a fruitful topic for future studies. As my results show, students are searching for new places and spaces and for alternative ways of being young men or women in Nicaraguan society. Yet, the research on gender hierarchies and youth remains quite scarce in Nicaragua. This seems to be in line with the comments of other scholars as well. Coe and Vandergrift (2015: 145-146) note that many studies conducted among the Latin American youth take into account the impact of class hierarchies, while gender hierarchies are only considered in a few studies. Consequently, an intersectional approach is needed since it allows us to focus on the complex interplay of variables such as gender, class and race.

Several scholars have discussed gender and capital, and how Bourdieu’s insights could be useful for gender studies as well as youth studies. McCall (1992: 841-843) discusses gendered forms of cultural capital; Skeggs (1997) has used the concept of capital to study experiences of working class women; Huppatz (2013) has used the concept of gender capitals when researching and analyzing feminized occupations and work-life stories; and Tolonen (2005: 343-361) has noted how social capital produced in local social networks is used differently according to gender. Based on my results, I suggest that

research on social capital and gender in the lives of young Nicaraguans and young Latin Americans would be a valuable topic for youth studies scholars. Since my results show that the social capital produced in local social networks and peer groups is of high importance in the lives of the young, my next question would be: How do the ways in which young women and men use social capital differ? Another interesting topic for further discussion is the previously mentioned question of masculinity as capital, and whether it should be considered social or cultural capital.

What is also of importance are the networks themselves. What are the gendered differences in the social networks that the young build, and how do the possible differences affect their lives and choices? These questions extend to the discussion on digital communications systems, Internet use and social media. As proposed above, I find research on social capital production online to be an important topic of study. Research such as this should include analyses of gender hierarchies, since who is included in the networks plays a major role. Since the research in Latin America has focused mostly on social mobilization online, there is already information available that could be of benefit in further analysis of gender and social capital. In the next section I outline some of the obstacles and possibilities in Latin American youth studies and present my suggestions for possible future courses of research.

As a foreword to this last section I wish to highlight the fact that most of the students who participated in this study were generally quite happy with their lives. Yet, many expressed concerns about the current political situation of the country, and their employment opportunities. Even though economic insecurity, political turbulences and very unclear career prospects were the concerns of most of the students who participated in this study I wish to underline that most of them were happy with their choices and content with their everyday lives. As shown in this study, most of the students who participated did not feel discriminated against or excluded, nor had they lost hope when it came to their own future. They did recognize several obstacles, difficulties and inequalities in the society they lived in, but despite this they were very committed to constructing the future Nicaraguan society and many showed a proactive and positive attitude despite the economic difficulties they were facing. Thus, it is important to note that despite the undeniable importance of economic factors, there were many just as important, or even more important things in the lives of the participants of this study than economic resources. The students who participated in the interviews stated that while they did wish for economic stability, other factors apart from economic resources brought most meaning to their lives. Many of the students found meaning in the time spent with their families, in religion and within their peer groups. Some of them expressed the wish to live comfortably, but this often did not include any particularly grandiose economic aspirations, rather an opportunity to live a family life and provide for oneself. Hence, it is important to take into account that to construct a meaningful life and to understand what is included in creating these meanings goes far beyond economic or material resources. My conversations with the students, and my ethnographic material from the field, showed that community ties, a sense of belonging and a feeling of agency can be much more significant in the lives of the young than mere economic matters, and can enable them to overcome such difficulties.

In general, as discussed in this study, the generational framework of Latin American youth studies has channeled the research into specific topics, while ignoring other possible fields of study. Thus, as my first suggestion, I would argue that to broaden the image of youth in Latin America, questions beyond generations and political mobility, poverty, crime and violence should be addressed. My first suggestion would be to open up the scope of research to include young people from more diverse social backgrounds, in this case meaning young people who are not necessarily facing social problems such as organized crime, gang membership or teenage pregnancies. Many studies on Nicaraguan women

focused mainly on the experiences of leftist Sandinista women (e.g. Chinchilla 1983, Molyneux 1984, Randall 1981, Reif 1986) while right-wing Somocista women were only studied a decade later (González 2001, González-Rivera and Kampwirth 2010). Similarly, the current research on Nicaraguan youth only focuses on one part of the Nicaraguan youth population, even though other members of this population could also provide us with valuable information. Students and their experiences are overlooked in many studies of Latin American youth and in some countries the focus tends to be on students' political mobilization. Also, there are many young people in Latin America who come from strikingly different economic circumstances than the excluded young people that the studies often tend to focus on. Young people with economic resources, wealthy families and no evident money related obstacles are strikingly absent from the studies. Yet they too form a part of the societies researched, and it would be of significant importance to learn more about their experiences.

My second suggestion relates to the youth studies paradigm in Latin America. Youth research in Latin America has concentrated mainly on political mobilization and youth movements. Even digital communications of the young have been researched mainly from a social protest point of view. This perspective is quite narrow. Coe and Wandegrift (2015: 136-137) argue that the focus of Latin American youth studies within a generational framework limits the researchers' possibilities to theorize the young peoples' political practices, and even prevents us from seeing occurring political identities. This raises an interesting insight: many European and Australian scholars wish to move toward a generation paradigm since they feel that the focus on transitions limits our capacity to theorize and understand the fragmented and changing experiences of the young, while in Latin America the focus on generational framework is criticized for the exact same reason. Hence, in the light of this and the results presented in this study, my questions for future theoretical conversation would be as follows: Can these limits that we see in youth studies frameworks and theories be culturally related? Does a framework that is limited to one part of the globe widen our perspective on other parts of the globe? To what extent do the social conditions of different cultures affect how a theory limits or widens our understanding? Should we focus more on combining the two paradigms: global and local? As a Latin American studies scholar, I would like to suggest that some answers may lie in Latin America, as we learn more of the lives and social realities of the young of this very diverse region.

The field of Latin American studies offers a wide variety of spectrums in the lives of the people of the region. As Pärssinen (2002: 108) concludes, the field of Latin American studies does not as such have a

specific methodology, but involves a wide range of disciplines. The strength of Latin American studies is that it offers strategies to bring different disciplines together. Thus, I argue that interdisciplinary youth studies and sociology of youth can greatly benefit from the scope Latin American studies scholars can offer when studying youth in Latin America. Throughout this study, I have discussed how different paradigms and core debates in the field of youth studies focus to a large extent on the English-speaking sphere of youth research. With youth studies in Latin America, the obstacles and challenges of theorizing the lives of the young are somewhat the same as in Europe, namely how does one do justice to the experiences of the young and at the same time produce valid information about people living in a multitude of complex social changes and different environments. One specific obstacle in Latin America is the available funding. As stated before, funding is frequently tied to development goals and questions that deal with the most vulnerable youth. Thus, in small countries such as Nicaragua the young who do not fall into this category fall out of the scope of the research. Yet, they too form a part of the society's youth. This study has aimed to fill a part of this gap in the existing study of Nicaraguan youth, yet much remains unstudied.

My next step is to make the results presented here available for further scrutiny for students' research and youth studies scholars alike in Spanish. My wish is to open up dialogue, provoke questions and hopefully learn what thoughts, questions or critique my results evoke both among the Nicaraguan students and Latin American youth studies scholars. If possible, it would be extremely interesting to do a follow up on the students who participated in this research, and learn more about their current situation and their lives. Since this study also expresses my affection for what I consider my second home country, and a story of that country, I feel it is appropriate to end this study with a favorite poem from my childhood, the words of a poet cherished by all Nicaraguans:

*Margarita, está linda la mar,
y el viento
lleva esencia sutil de azahar;
en el alma una alondra cantar:
tu acento.
Margarita, te voy a contar
un cuento.*²¹⁶

Rubén Darío, Margarita

²¹⁶ Margarita, the sea is beautiful, and the wind brings a subtle essence of lemon blossoms; in the soul a lark sings; your accent. Margarita, I will tell you a story.

Around the same time that I received a message from my first supervisor, Martti Pärssinen, that this dissertation was ready for pre-examination, the government of Nicaragua announced new legislation that decreased the pensions of workers and reduced overall benefits. On Wednesday 18 April 2018 the pensioners took to the streets of Managua. The next day students and workers followed them and violence began soon after. The students of Upoli, UCA, UNA, UNI, UCC, UdeM, UDO, Uponic, and Uraccan formed a group called Movimiento Universitario 19 de Abril, basing its operations in UPOLI. Getting information from Managua has been difficult, since some of the areas have been tranquil, while others are in a state of chaos. Since my godchildren's family live just two blocks from UPOLI I received live information from the campus and the campus gates, including live videos of the violence almost on a daily basis. The young, who had previously been criticized for being lazy, and not taking part in political or societal action, had taken to the streets. Some of them were demanding democracy, some were defending the FSLN. The tensions mentioned in this study between students who do not belong to the governing party and the young supporters of FSLN's youth and student organizations had flared into violence.

Movimiento Universitario 19 de Abril made it clear that the students' union UNEN did not represent them or support them. They also made it clear that they wished to represent all Nicaraguan students as well as the civil society. The main demand at the beginning of the protests was to cancel the new pension legislation. However, after the situation escalated many demanded the resignation of Ortega, and the elimination of party politics from all universities and schools in the country. Demands for freedom of speech and respect for civil liberties increased, yet the international media remained silent. Government buildings have been burning and Juventud Sandinista has attacked residents in many neighborhoods. Barricades are back on the streets of Managua, just as they were in the 1990s.

The supporters of the FSLN, riot police, angry workers and university students have all been out on the streets. What is clear is that most of the protesters who lost their lives were university students, many of them protesting peacefully. People are scouring the social media for their relatives and children. Some of the students identified themselves by drawing their family's phone number and their name on their body. Instagram and Facebook have been filled with pictures such as those shown below with hash tags #queserindatumadre (tell your mother to surrender) and #sosnicaragua. Some of the protesters on the

recent peace marches have worn T-shirts stating #eranestudiantes, they were students, since many of the young protesters were related to gang members and criminals.

The Vice-President Rosario Murillo gave a speech where she declared that the deaths had been invented and the protests were artificial and destructive. The government shut down water and electricity supplies in some parts of the country, including some of the neighborhoods where my Managuan friends live. The international community has been shockingly quiet, and there has been very little media response to the situation.

The tensions that led to protest and to subsequent government oppression can be seen in the results documented in this study. As I am writing this afterword, the situation has calmed a little. However, the unrest continues and the government keeps oppressing its own citizens. Human rights organizations have reported illegal arrests, torture, and people who simply never returned after being taken into custody by the police. By the end of November 2018, 535 people had lost their lives, and around 4,350 had been injured. Several students and human rights activists are still missing. According to my informants, the dead include four students who participated in this research.

I wish to offer my most sincere condolences to all the Nicaraguan families who have lost their loved ones during these last few months. My heart goes out to you.

Nicaragua libre y vivir!



Above from left to right: Students protesting in front of UNI, 20 April 2018. An Instagram meme of national hero Augusto Sandino carrying the heads of President Ortega and Vice-President Murillo. A banner stating, “They can silence the media but never the people” on the wall of UPOLI, 23 April 2018.

Below from left to right: A statement circulating in Instagram and Facebook demanding “Complete elimination of this flag [FSLN] from our university and school areas.” A picture circulating in Instagram with a reference to the revolution of 19 July 1979 stating that: “Every dictator gets their 19th.” A picture circulating in Instagram comparing the student massacre of 1959 and the events of April 2018. All pictures are screenshots from Instagram and Facebook with the hashtags #queserindetumadre and #sosnicaragua. It was not possible to determine who created the original pictures.

References

- Abaunza, H. & Solórzano, I. (1998). *Voces, vidas y viciones. Jóvenes, cambio social y acción colectiva en la Nicaragua de los 90*. Managua: Puntos de Encuentro.
- Adkins, L. & Skeggs, B. (2004). *Feminism After Bourdieu*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Agudelo, I. (1999) *El rápido tránsito. Imágenes de la adolescencia y la juventud en Nicaragua*. Managua: Sisitema de Naciones Unidas en Nicaragua.
- Ahier, J., & Moore, R. (1999). Post-16 Education, Semi-dependent Youth and the Privatisation of Inter-age Transfers: Re-theorising Youth Transition. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 20(4), 515-530.
- Álvarez Montalván, E. (2008). *Cultura política nicaragüense*. Managua: Hispamer.
- Amna, E. & Ekman, J. (2014). Standby Citizens: Diverse Faces of Political Passivity. *European Political Science Review*, 6(2), 261-281.
- Ampuja, M. (2012). *Theorizing Globalization: A Critique of the Mediatization of Social Theory*. Leiden; Biggleswade: Brill
- Anderson, L. & Dodd, L. C. (2005). *Learning Democracy: Citizen Engagement and Electoral Choice in Nicaragua, 1990-2001*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- André G. & Hilgers, M. (2015). Collective Agents in the School Field: Positions, Dispositions and Position Taking in Educational and Vocational Guidance. In M. Hilgers & E. Mangez (eds.) *Bourdieu's Theory of Social Fields. Concepts and Applications*, 121-139. London: Routledge.
- Andrews, M. (2007). *Shaping History: Narratives of Political Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Angel, A. & Macintosh, F. (1987). *The Tiger's Milk: Women of Nicaragua*. London: Virago Press.
- Angrosino, M. (2007). *Doing Ethnographic and Observational Research*. London: SAGE.
- Appadurai, A. (1990). Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 7(2), 295-310.
- (1996). *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Archer, M. (1995). *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Arciniega, G. M., Anderson, T. C., Tovar-Blank, Z. G., & Tracey, T. J. (2008). Toward a Fuller Conception of Machismo: Development of a Traditional Machismo and Caballerismo Scale. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 55(1), 19-33.

- Arnett, J.J. (2004). *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- (2006). Emerging Adulthood in Europe: A Response to Bynner. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 9(1), 111-123.
- (2011). Emerging adulthood (s). The Cultural Psychology of a New Lifestage. In L. A. Jensen (ed.) (2011). *Bridging Cultural and Developmental Approaches to Psychology: New Syntheses in Theory, Research, and Policy*, 255-275. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.
- (2014). *Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood*. Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Babb, F. E. (2001). *After Revolution: Mapping Gender and Cultural Politics in Neoliberal Nicaragua*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Barker, G. T. (2005). *Dying to Be Men: Youth, Masculinity and Social Exclusion*. London: Routledge.
- Bassani, C. (2009). Young People and Social Capital. In A. Furlong (ed.) *Handbook of Youth and Young Adulthood: New Perspectives and Agendas*, 74-80. Abingdon: Routledge
- (2007). Five Dimensions of Social Capital Theory as They Pertain to Youth, *Journal of Youth Studies*, 10(1), 17-34.
- Beavis, C. (2008). New Textual Worlds: Young People and Computer Games. In N. Dolby & F. Rizvi (eds.) *Youth Moves. Identities and Education in Global Perspective*, 53-66. New York: Routledge.
- Beck, U. (1992). *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. London: Sage.
- Beck, U. & Beck-Gernsheim, E. (2009). Global Generations and the Trap of Methodological Nationalism: For a Cosmopolitan Turn in the Sociology of Youth and Generation, *European Sociological Review*, 25(1), 25-36.
- Bellanger, W., López Ruiz, P., Rocha, J.L., Sosa, J.J. (2004). *Muerte arriba. Las pandillas en Nicaragua 1999-2004*. Managua: DIRINPRO, NITLAPAN, IDESO
- Belli, G. (2000). *El país bajo mi piel. Memorias de amor y de la guerra*. Nafarroa: Editorial Txalaparta
- Bermúdez, E., & Martínez, G. (2010). Los estudios sobre juventud. Algunas tendencias y lugares de la producción de conocimiento sobre los jóvenes en Venezuela. In S.V. Alvarado & P. A. Vommaro (eds.) *Jóvenes, cultura y política en América Latina: algunos trayectos de sus relaciones, experiencias y lecturas (1960-2000)*, 89-112. Rosario: Homo Sapiens Ediciones.
- Bhabha, H. (1995). *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge
- Bickham Mendez, J. (2005). *From the Revolution to the Maquiladoras. Gender, Labor, and Globalization in Nicaragua*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

- Biggart, A., & Walther, A. (2006). Coping with Yo-Yo Transitions: Young Adults' Struggle for Support between Family and State in Comparative Perspective. In E. Ruspini (ed.) *A New Youth? Young People, Generations and Family Life*, 41-62. London: Routledge.
- Biklen, S. K. (2004). Trouble on Memory Lane: Adults and Self-retrospection in Researching Youth. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 10(5), 715-730.
- Blatterer, H. (2007). Adulthood: The Contemporary Redefinition of a Social Category. *Sociological Research Online*, 12(4), 1-11.
- (2010) The Changing Semantics of Youth and Adulthood. *Cultural Sociology*, 4(1), 63-79.
- Bogen, K. W. (2015). Reproductive Rights in Latin America: A Case Study of Guatemala and Nicaragua. *Scholarly Undergraduate Research Journal at Clark*, 1(1), 1-10.
- Booth, J., Wade, C.J., & Walker, T. W. (2006). *Understanding Central America: Global Forces, Rebellion, and Change*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- (1984). *Distinction: A Social Critique on the Judgment of Taste*. Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press.
- (1986). The Forms of Capital. In J. Richardson (ed.) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, 241-258. New York: Greenwood.
- (1990). Droit et passe-droit. Le champ des pouvoirs territoriaux et la mise en oeuvre de réglemants. *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* 81/82: 86-96 URL <http://www.persee.fr/doc/arss_0335-5322_1990_num_81_1_2928>
- (1996a). *The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power*. Cambridge: Polity Press
- (1996b). *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- (1998). *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action*. Cambridge: Polity.
- (2001) *Masculine Domination*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. & Nice, R. (1990). *The Logic of Practice*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bourdieu, P. & Thompson, J. B. (1991). *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, P. & Wacquant, L. J. D. (1992). *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Boyd, D. (2014). *It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

- Brannen, J., & Nilsen, A. (2005). Individualisation, Choice and Structure: A Discussion of Current Trends in Sociological Analysis. *The Sociological Review*, 53(3), 412-428.
- Bravo, F. R. G. (2016). Riesgos y consecuencias de las prácticas sexuales en los adolescentes de Juigalpa, bajo los efectos de alcohol y otras drogas, Chontales, Nicaragua. *Revista Científica de la FAREM-Estelí*, 9, 71-77.
- Brockmeier, J. (2009). Reaching for Meaning: Human Agency and the Narrative Imagination. *Theory & Psychology*, 19(2), 213-233.
- Brown, B.B., Larson, R.W. & Saraswati, T.S. (2002). The Kaleidoscope of Adolescence. Experiences of the World's Youth at the Beginning of the 21st Century. In B. B. Brown, R.W. Larson, & T.S. Saraswati (eds.) *The World's Youth: Adolescence in Eight Regions of the Globe*, 1-20. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bruneau, T. C., Dammert, L., Skinner, E. (2011). *Maras: Gang Violence and Security in Central America*. Austin: University of Texas Press
- Buckingham, D., & Willett, R. (2013). *Digital Generations: Children, Young People, and the New Media*. London: Routledge.
- Burrell, G., & Morgan, G. (1979). *Sociological Paradigms and Organizational Analysis*. London, Heinemann.
- Bynner, J. (2005). Reconstructing the Youth Phase of the Life Course: The Case of Emerging Adulthood. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 8(4), 367-384.
- Cabezas, O. (2007). *La montaña es algo más que una inmensa estapa verde*. 5th edition, Managua: Anamá Ediciones.
- Cairns, D., de Almeida Alves, N., Alexandre, A., & Correia, A. (2016). *Youth Unemployment and Job Precariousness: Political Participation in a Neo-Liberal Era*. New York: Springer.
- Cardenal, E. (2003). *La Revolución perdida*. Managua: Anamá Ediciones.
- Carr, D. (1991). *Time, Narrative, and History*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Cassell, J. & Jenkins, H. (1998). Chess for Girls? Feminism and Computer Games. In J. Cassell & H. Jenkins (eds.) *From Barbie to Mortal Kombat: Gender and Computer Games*, 2-45. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Castells, M. (1997). *The Power of Identity*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Chan, K. B., Hayward, D. & Walls, J. (2007). *East-West Identities: Globalization, Localization, and Hybridization*. Leiden; Boston: Brill.

- Chan, M., Tsai, K. M., & Fuligni, A. J. (2015). Changes in Religiosity Across the Transition to Young Adulthood. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 44(8), 1555-1566.
- Charlip, J. A. (2003). *Cultivating Coffee: The Farmers of Carazo, Nicaragua, 1880-1930*. Athens: Ohio University Press.
- Chen, J., Zeng, X., & Deng, Y. (2016). Environmental Pollution and Shipping Feasibility of the Nicaragua Canal. *Marine Pollution Bulletin*, 113(1), 87-93.
- Chinchilla, N.S. (1994). Feminism, Revolution, and Democratic Transitions in Nicaragua. In J.S. Jaquette (ed.) *The Women's Movement in Latin America: Participation and Democracy*, 177-197. Boulder: Westview Press.
- (1983). *Women in Revolutionary Movements: The Case of Nicaragua*. Women in International Development: Michigan State University.
- Cieslick, M., and Simpson, D. (2013). *Key Concepts in Youth Studies*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Close, David (2016). *Nicaragua: Navigating the Politics of Democracy*. Colorado: Lynne Rienne Publishers, Inc.
- Coe, A-B. (2015). I Am Not Just a Feminist Eight Hours a Day. Youth Gender Justice Activism in Ecuador and Peru. *Gender & Society*, 29(6), 888-913.
- Coe, A. B., & Vandegrift, D. (2015). Youth Politics and Culture in Contemporary Latin America: A Review. *Latin American Politics and Society*, 57(2), 132-153.
- Coleman, S. (1988). Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94, 95-120.
- Coles, B. (2005). *Youth and Social Policy: Youth Citizenship and Young Careers*. London: Routledge.
- Coles, T. (2009). Negotiating the Field of Masculinity: The Production and Reproduction of Multiple Dominant Masculinities. *Men and Masculinities*, 12(1), 30-44.
- Connell, R.W. (2005). *Masculinities*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Connell, R. W., & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005). Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept. *Gender & Society*, 19(6), 829-859.
- Cooper, D. (2018). Pentecostalism and the Peasantry: Domestic and Spiritual Economies in Rural Nicaragua. *Ethnos*, 1-24.
- Cordón, A. (2011). *Desempleo e inactividad juvenil en Nicaragua*. Managua: Banco Central de Nicaragua.

- Corrales, J. (2008). Latin America's Neocaudillismo: Ex-Presidents and Newcomers Running for President...and Winning. *Latin American Politics and Society*, 50(3), 1-35.
- Correll, S. J. (2001). Gender and the Career Choice Process: The Role of Biased Self-assessments. *American Journal of Sociology*, 106(6), 1691-1730.
- Côté, J. E. (1994). *Adolescents Storm and Stress: An Evaluation of the Mead Freeman Controversy*. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- (2005). Identity Capital, Social Capital and the Wider Benefits of Learning: Generating Resources Facilitative of Social Cohesion. *London Review of Education*, 3(3), 221-237
- (2014a). *Youth Studies: Fundamental Issues and Debates*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- (2014b). The Dangerous Myth of Emerging Adulthood: An Evidence-Based Critique of a Flawed Developmental Theory. *Applied Developmental Science*, 18(4), 177–188
- (2016). *The Identity Capital Model: A Handbook of Theory, Methods, and Findings*. Unpublished Manuscript, Department of Sociology, The University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, Canada. URL
<<http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1038&context=sociologypub>>
- Côté, J. E. & Allahar, A. (2006). *Critical Youth Studies: A Canadian Focus*. Toronto: Pearson Education.
- Crane, D. (2012). *Fashion and Its Social Agendas: Class, Gender, and Identity in Clothing*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Cranny-Francis, A., Waring, W., Stavropoulos, P., Kirkby, J. (2003). *Gender Studies: Terms and Debates*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Cunningham, W. V. (2008). *Youth at Risk in Latin America and the Caribbean: Understanding the Causes, Realizing the Potential*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.
- Cupples, J. (2004). Counter-Revolutionary Women: Gender and Reconciliation in Post-war Nicaragua. *Gender & Development*, 12(3), 8-18.
- Dalsgård, A. L. (2014). Standing Apart. On Time, Affect, and Discernment in Nordeste, Brazil. In A. L. Dalsgård, M. D. Frederiksen, S. Hojlund and L. Meinet (eds.) *Ethnographies on Youth and Temporality: Time Objectified*, 97-116. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- DaMatta, R. (1991). *Carnivals, Rogues, and Heroes: An Interpretation of the Brazilian Dilemma*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Davies, C. A. (2008). *Reflexive Ethnography. A Guide to Researching Selves and Others*. New York: Routledge.

Delli Carpini, M. X. (2000). Gen.com: Youth, Civic Engagement, and the New Information Environment. *Political Communication*, 17(4), 341-349.

Dore, E. (1997). The Holy Family: Imagined Households in Latin American History. In E. Dore (ed.) *Gender Politics in Latin America: Debates in Theory and Practice*, 101-114. New York: Monthly Review Press

Doucet, A. & Mauthner, N. (2002). Knowing Responsibility: Linking Ethics, Research Practice and Epistemology. In, M. Mauthner (ed.) *Ethics in Qualitative Research*, 124-145. London: SAGE.

Doyle, M. S. (2016). Nicaragua's Grand Canal: A Case Study in Political and Economic Culture. *Global Advances in Business Communication*, 5(1), 1-13.

Droogers, A. (2014). The Cultural Dimensions of Pentecostalism. In C. M. Robeck Jr. & A. Young (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism*, 195-214. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Du Bois-Reymond, M. (1998). 'I Don't Want to Commit Myself Yet': Young People's Life Concepts. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 1(1), 63-79.

– (2016). Emerging Adulthood Theory Under Scrutiny. *Emerging Adulthood*, 4(4), 242-243.

Du Bois-Reymond, M., & López Blasco, A. (2003). Yo-Yo Transitions and Misleading Trajectories: Towards Integrated Transition Policies for Young Adults in Europe. In A. L. Blasco, W., McNeish, & A. Walther (eds.) *Young People and Contradictions of Inclusion: Towards Integrated Transition Policies in Europe*, 19-42. Bristol: Policy Press.

Edmund, J. and Turner, B.S. (2005). Global Generations: Social Change in the Twentieth Century. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 56(4), 559-577.

Edwards, D. (1997). *Discourse and Cognition*. London: Sage.

Edwards, R., Garonna, P., & Ryan, P. (eds.). (2016). *The Problem of Youth: The Regulation of Youth Employment and Training in Advanced Economies*. New York: Springer.

Edwards, T. (2006). *Cultures of Masculinity*. London: Routledge.

EGRIS (European Group for Integrated Social Research) (2001). Misleading Trajectories – Transition Dilemmas of Young Adults in Europe. *Journal of Youth Studies* 4(1), 101–119.

Eisenstad, S.N. (1956). *From Generation to Generation: Age Groups and Social Structure*. Glencoe: The Free Press.

Elder, G. H Jr. (1974). *Children and the Great Depression: Social Change in Life Experience*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

– (1994). Time, Human Agency, and Social Change: Perspectives on the Life Course. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 57(1), 4-15.

– (1998a). The Life Course as Development Theory, *Child Development*, 69(1), 1-12

- (1998b). The Life Course and Human Development. In W. Damon (ed.) *The Handbook of Child Psychology*, 665-715. New York: Wiley
- Erikson, E.H. (1968). *Identity, Youth and Crisis*. New York: Norton.
- Evans, K. (2007). Concepts of Bounded Agency in Education, Work, and the Personal Lives of Young Adults. *International Journal of Psychology*, 42(2), 85-93.
- Evans, K. & Furlong, A. (1997). Metaphors of Youth Transitions: Niches, Pathways, Trajectories or Navigations. In J. Bynner, L. Chisholm & A. Furlong (eds.) *Youth, Citizenship and Social Change in a European Context*, 17-41. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Evans-Pritchard, E. E. (1960). *Kinship and Marriage among the Nuer*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. University Press.
- Facio, A., Prestofelippo, M. E., Sireix, M. C. (2017). Positive Development in Latin American Emerging Adults. In L. M. Padilla-Walker and L. J. Nelson *Flourishing in Emerging Adulthood*, 450-460. Oxford University Press.
- Facio, A., Resett, S., Micocci, F., & Mistrorigo, C. (2007). Emerging Adulthood in Argentina: An Age of Diversity and Possibilities. *Child Development Perspectives*, 1(2), 115-118.
- Flacks, M. (2007). 'Label Jars Not People' How (Not) to Study Youth Civic Engagement. In A. L. Best (ed.) *Representing Youth: Methodological Issues in Critical Youth Studies*, 60-83. New York: New York.
- Flanagan, C. (2009). Young People's Civic Engagement and Political Development (2009) In A. Furlong (ed.) *Handbook of Youth and Young Adulthood: New Perspectives and Agendas*, 293-300. Oxon: Routledge.
- Fornäs, J. (1995). Youth, Culture and Modernity. In J. Fornäs & G. Bolin (eds.) *Youth Culture in Late Modernity*, 1-11. London: Sage.
- Fowler, B. (2003). Reading Pierre Bourdieu's Masculine Domination: Notes Towards an Intersectional Analysis of Gender, Culture and Class. *Cultural Studies*, 17(3-4), 468-494.
- Fowler, F.J. Jr. (1995). *Improving Survey Questions: Design and Evaluation*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- France, A. and Roberts, S. (2015). The Problem of Social Generations: A Critique of the New Emerging Orthodoxy in Youth Studies. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 18(2), 215-230.
- France, A., Roberts, S., & Wood, B. (2018). Youth, Social Class and Privilege in the Antipodes: Towards a New Research Agenda for Youth Sociology. *Journal of Sociology*, 54(3), 362-380.
- Fredriksen S., & Dalsgård, A. L. (2014). Introduction: Time Objectified. In A. L. Dalsgård, M. D. Frederiksen, S. Hojlund and L. Meinet (eds.) *Ethnographies on Youth and Temporality: Time Objectified*, 1-22. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

- French, W.E. & Bliss, K.E. (2007). Introduction: Gender, Sexuality, and Power in Latin America since Independence. In F. William, E. Bliss (eds.) *Gender, Sexuality, and Power in Latin America since Independence*, 1-30. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Fromme, J. (2003). Computer Games as a Part of Children's Culture. *Game Studies*, 3(1), 49-62.
- Furlong, A. (2009). Reconceptualising Youth and Young Adulthood. In A. Furlong (ed.) *Handbook of Youth and Young Adulthood. New Perspectives and Agendas*, 1-3. Abingdon: Routledge.
- (2013). *Youth Studies: An Introduction*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Furlong, A. & Cartmel, F. (2007). *Young People and Social Change: New Perspectives*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Furstenberg Jr, F. F. (2010). On a New Schedule: Transitions to Adulthood and Family Change. *The Future of Children*, 20(1), 67-87.
- Fussel, E. & Greene, M. E. (2002). Demographic Trends Affecting Youth around the World. In B. B. Brown, W. R. Larson & T. S. Saraswathi (eds.) *The World's Youth: Adolescence in Eight Regions of the Globe*, 21-60. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gaetz, S. (2004). Safe Streets for Whom? Homeless Youth, Social Exclusion, and Criminal Victimization. *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 46(4), 423-456.
- Gay y Blasco, P. & Wardle, H. (2007) *How to Read Ethnography*. London: Routledge.
- Geertz, C. (1973). Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight. *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 101, 412-37.
- Giele, J. Z., & Elder, G. H. (Eds.). (1998). *Methods of Life Course Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. London: Sage.
- Gibbs, G. (2007). *Analyzing Qualitative Data*. London: Sage.
- Giddens, A. (1976). *New Rules of Sociological Method*. London: Hutchinson.
- (1990). *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Goicolea, I., Coe, A. B., & Ohman, A. (2014). Easy to Oppose, Difficult to Propose: Young Activist Men's Framing of Alternative Masculinities Under the Hegemony of Machismo in Ecuador. *Young*, 22(4), 399-419.
- Gómez, J. L. R. (2007). Mapping the Labyrinth from Within: The Political Economy of Nicaraguan Youth Policy concerning Violence. *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 26(4), 533-549.
- González, J. L. (2008). *Christianity in Latin America: A History*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

- González, V. (2001). Somocista Women, Right-wing Politics, and Feminism in Nicaragua, 1936-1979. In V. González-Rivera & K. Kampwirth (eds.) *Radical Women in Latin America: Left and Right*, 41-78. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press
- Gonzalez-Ocantos, E. (2012). Vote Buying and Social Desirability Bias: Experimental Evidence from Nicaragua. *American Journal of Political Science*, 56(1), 202-217.
- González-Rivera, V., & Kampwirth, K. (eds.). (2010). *Radical Women in Latin America: Left and Right*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Gooren, H. (2003). The Religious Market in Nicaragua: The Paradoxes of Catholicism and Protestantism. *Exchange*, 32(4), 340-360.
- (2010). Ortega for President: The Religious Rebirth of Sandinismo in Nicaragua. *European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, 89, 47-63.
- Gordillo-Tobar, A., Beneitez, G., Ortega, J., Waters, W., & Bravo, E. (2014). *Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Nicaragua: An Analysis Using a Sexual and Reproductive Health Framework and Human Rights*. World Bank Knowledge Brief. URL
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/276204580_Adolescent_Sexual_and_Reproductive_Health_and_Rights_in_Nicaragua_An_Analysis_using_a_Sexual_and_Reproductive_Health_Framework_and_Human_Rights 1.9.2017>
- Gordon, H. R., & Taft, J. K. (2011). Rethinking Youth Political Socialization: Teenage Activists Talk Back. *Youth & Society*, 43(4), 1499-1527.
- Grabe, S. (2010). Promoting Gender Equality: The Role of Ideology, Power, and Control in the Link between Land Ownership and Violence in Nicaragua. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, 10(1), 146-170.
- Grindle, M. S. (2012). *Jobs for the Boys: Patronage and the State in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Hall, G.S. (1904). *Adolescence: Its Psychology and its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education*. New York: Appleton.
- Hall, S. (1996). *Introduction: Who Needs Identity?* In S. Hall & P. Du Gay (eds.) *Questions of Cultural Identity*, 1-17. London: Sage.
- Harlow, S. (2012). Social Media and Social Movements: Facebook and an Online Guatemalan Justice Movement that Moved Offline. *New Media & Society*, 14(2), 225-243.
- (2016). Reconfiguring and Remediating Social Media as Alternative Media: Exploring Youth Activists' Digital Media Ecology in El Salvador. *Palabra Clave*, 19(4), 997-1026.
- Harris, A. (2009). Young People, Politics and Citizenship. In A. Furlong (ed.) *Handbook of Youth and Young Adulthood: New Perspectives and Agendas*, 301-306. Oxon: Routledge.

- Heaton, J. (2017). Revolutionary Gender Equality: The Dimensions and Limits of Emancipation in the Sandinista Revolution. *Constellations*, 8(2), 23-37.
- Heinz, W.R. (2009). Youth Transitions in an Age of Uncertainty. In A. Furlong (ed.) *Handbook of Youth and Young Adulthood: New Perspectives and Agendas*, 3-13. Abingdon: Routledge
- Held, D. & McGrew, A. (2002). *Globalization/anti-globalization*. Cambridge: Polity.
- (2007). *Globalization Theory: Approaches and Controversies*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Helve, H. & Bynner, J. (2007). Introduction. In H. Helve & J. Bynner (eds.) *Youth and Social Capital*, 1-10. London: The Tufnell Press.
- Henn, M., Weinstein, M., & Wring, D. (2002). A Generation Apart? Youth and Political Participation in Britain. *The British Journal of Politics & International Relations*, 4(2), 167-192.
- Hernández, M. M. V., & Rojas, E. M. (2016). Factores que determinan el rendimiento académico en Matemáticas en la Universidad Nacional de Ingeniería (UNI), Nicaragua: un modelo de ecuaciones estructurales. *Universitas Psychologica*, 15(4), 1-11.
- Herrman, R. K. (2004). Regional Conflicts as Turning Points: The Soviet and American Withdrawal from Angola, Afganistan and Nicaragua. In R. K. Herrmann & R. N. Lebow, *Ending the Cold War: Interpretations, Causation, and the Study of International Relations*, 59-82. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hilgers, M. & Magnez, E. (2015). Introduction to Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Social Fields. In M. Hilgers, & E. Mangez (eds.) *Bourdieu's Theory of Social Fields: Concepts and Applications*, 1-36. London: Routledge.
- Hirsjärvi, S. & Hurme, H. (2008). *Tutkimushaastattelu: teemahaastattelun teoria ja käytäntö*. Helsinki: Gaudeamus.
- Hodges, D. C. (1986). *Intellectual Foundations of the Nicaraguan Revolution*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Hoff, J. (2006). Virtual Capital? Internet Competence and Political Participation in Denmark. *MedieKultur: Journal of Media and Communication Research*, 22(40),.
- Hoikkala, T. & Paju, P. (2008). Entä nuoremmat sukupolvet? Sukupolvitutkimus ja nuorisopolitiikka. In S. Purhonen, T. Hoikkala, J.P. Roos (eds.) *Kenen sukupolveen kuulut?*, 270-294. Helsinki: Gaudeamus.
- Hollands, R. (2003). Double Exposure: Exploring the Social and Political Relations of Ethnographic Youth Research. In A. Bennett, M. Cieslik, & S. Miles (eds.) *Researching Youth*, 157-169. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Howard, P. N., Duffy, A., Freelon, D., Hussain, M. M., Mari, W., & Maziad, M. (2011). Opening Closed Regimes: What Was the Role of Social Media During the Arab Spring? *PITPI Working Paper 2011.1*

- Huete-Pérez, J. A., Ortega-Hegg, M., Urquhart, G. R., Covich, A. P., Vammen, K., Rittmann, B. E., & Gómez, J. P. (2016). Critical Uncertainties and Gaps in the Environmental-and Social-Impact Assessment of the Proposed Interoceanic Canal through Nicaragua. *Bio Science*, 66(8), 632-645.
- Hunt, S. (2005). *The Life Course: A Sociological Introduction*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Huppatz, K. (2013). Masculinised Jobs, Feminised Jobs and Men's 'Gender Capital' Experiences: Understanding Occupational Segregation in Australia. *Journal of Sociology*, 49(2-3), 291-308.
- Isbester, K. (2001). *Still Fighting: The Nicaraguan Women's Movement, 1977-2000*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Jacinto, C. (2008). Los dispositivos recientes de empleo juvenil: institucionalidades, articulaciones con la educación formal y socialización laboral. *Revista de Trabajo*, 4(6), 123-142.
- Jeffrey, C. (2010). *Timepass: Youth, Class, and the Politics of Waiting in India*. Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press.
- Jenkins, H., & Zimmerman, A. (2016). *By Any Media Necessary: The New Youth Activism*. New York: New York University Press.
- Jones, G. A. & Rodgers, D. (2009). *Youth Violence in Latin America*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Julkunen, I. (2009). Youth Unemployment and Marginalization. In A. Furlong (ed.) *Handbook of Youth and Young Adulthood. New Perspectives and Agendas*, 157-166. Oxon: Routledge.
- Jütersonke, O., Muggah, R., & Rodgers, D. (2009). Gangs, Urban Violence, and Security Interventions in Central America. *Security Dialogue*, 40(4-5), 373-397.
- Kampwirth, K. (2004). *Feminism and the Legacy of Revolution: Nicaragua, El Salvador, Chiapas*. Athens: Ohio University Press.
- (2008). Abortion, Antifeminism, and the Return of Daniel Ortega: In Nicaragua, Leftist Politics? *Latin American Perspectives*, 35(6), 122-136.
- (2011). *Latin America's New Left and the Politics of Gender: Lessons from Nicaragua*. New York: Springer.
- (2012). Populism and the Feminist Challenge in Nicaragua. The Return of Daniel Ortega. In K. Kampwirth (ed.) *Gender and Populism in Latin America: Passionate Politics*, 162-179. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Kauppi, N. (2000). *The Politics of Embodiment: Habits, Power, and Pierre Bourdieu's Theory*, Peter Lang: Frankfurt am Main.
- Keniston, K. (1968). *Young Radicals: Notes on Committed Youth*. New York: Harcourt Brace.

- Kivinen, O. (2006). Habitukset vai luontumukset? Pragmatistisia näkökulmia bourdieulaisittain objektiiviseen sosiologiatieteeseen. in Purhonen, S. & Roos, J.P. (eds.) *Bourdieu ja minä: näkökulmia Pierre Bourdieun sosiologiaan*, 227-266. Tampere: Vastapaino.
- Kohli, M. (1996). *The Problems of Generations: Family, Economy, Politics*. Collegium Budapest/Institute for Advanced Study.
- Kuula, A. (2011). *Tutkimuseetiikka*. Tampere: Vastapaino.
- Lahire, B. (2015). The Limits of the Field: Elements for a Theory of the Social Differentiation of Activities. In M. Hilgers & E. Mangez (eds.) *Bourdieu's Theory of Social Fields. Concepts and Applications*, 62-101. London: Routledge.
- Lam Rueda, D. O., Herrera, L., & Yanela, N. (2016). *Análisis de la enseñanza y aprendizaje sobre el VIH y Sida en los estudiantes del último año de la carrera de medicina de dos universidades de Nicaragua, UAM y UNAN-León, en el año 2013* (Doctoral dissertation). URL <<http://riul.unanleon.edu.ni:8080/jspui/bitstream/123456789/5348/1/231477.pdf>>
- Laracantu, M. A. (1989). A Sex Role Inventory with Scales for 'Machismo' and 'Self-Sacrificing Woman'. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 20(4), 386-398.
- LeBrón, M. (2011). 'Con un Flow Natural': Sonic Affinities and Reggaeton Nationalism. *Women & Performance: a Journal of Feminist Theory*, 21(2), 219-233.
- Lehmann, W. (2004). 'For Some Reason, I Get a Little Scared': Structure, Agency, and Risk in School-Work Transitions. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 7(4), 379-396.
- Leung, L. & Chan, K. (2012). Understanding the Masculinity Crisis: Implications for Men's Services in Hong Kong, *British Journal of Social Work*, 44 (2), 214-233.
- Lim, M. (2012). Clicks, Cabs, and Coffee Houses: Social Media and Oppositional Movements in Egypt, 2004-2011. *Journal of Communication*, 62(2), 231-248.
- Loader, B. D., Vromen, A., & Xenos, M. A. (2014). *The Networked Young Citizen: Social Media, Political Participation and Civic Engagement*. New York: Routledge.
- Lockley, M. G., Vasquez, R. G., Espinoza, E., & Lucas, S. G. (2009). America's Most Famous Human Footprints: History, Context and First Description of Mid-Holocene Tracks from the Shores of Lake Managua, Nicaragua. *Ichnos*, 16(1-2), 55-69.
- López Vigil, M. (1989). *Un güegüe me conto*. Wiwili / ANLIJ.
- Lucerno, V. M. (2017). La cultura mayangna. Una etnografía por imágenes. *Raíces—Revista Nicaragüense de Antropología*, 1(1), 99-104.
- (2018). La Familia en los Pueblos Originarios y Afrodescendientes. Una etnografía por imágenes. *Raíces—Revista Nicaragüense de Antropología*, 1(2), 53-58.

- Luciak, A. (2001). *After the Revolution: Gender and Democracy in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press
- Luffy, S. M., Evans, D. P., & Roach, R. W. (2015). "It Is Better If I Kill Her": Perceptions and Opinions of Violence Against Women and Femicide in Ocotlán, Nicaragua, After Law 779. *Violence and Gender* 2(2), 107-111.
- Maclure, R., & Sotelo, M. (2003.) Children's Rights as Residual Social Policy in Nicaragua: State Priorities and the Code of Childhood and Adolescence. *Third World Quarterly*, 24(4), 671-689.
- (2004). Youth Gangs in Nicaragua: Gang Membership as Structured Individualization. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 7(4), 417-432.
- Malaby, T. (2006). Parlaying Value: Capital in and Beyond Virtual Worlds. *Games and Culture*, 1(2), 141-162.
- Manji, A., Peña, R. & Dubrow, R. (2007). Sex, Condoms, Gender Roles, and HIV Transmission Knowledge among Adolescents in León, Nicaragua: Implications for HIV Prevention, *AIDS Care*, 19(8), 989–995.
- Mannheim, K. (1952). *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Marías, J. (1970/1949). *Generations: A Historical Method*. Alabama: The University of Alabama Press.
- Martín-Barbero, J. (1996). *Comunicación fin de siglo*. Innovarium. Innovatec-Innovarium, Caracas. URL < http://red.pucp.edu.pe/wp-content/uploads/biblioteca/Mart%C3%ADn_Barbero_Comunicacion_fin_siglo.pdf>
- (2002). Jóvenes: comunicación e identidad. *Pensar Iberoamérica*, 6, 1-10.
- Mathwick, C., Wiertz, C., & De Ruyter, K. (2007). Social Capital Production in a Virtual P3 Community. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34(6), 832-849.
- Maurizio, M. (2013). *Income Distribution and Labour Market in Latin America in Times of Economic Growth*, Paper Prepared for the IARIW-IBGE Conference on Income, Wealth and Well-Being in Latin America URL <<http://www.iariw.org/papers/2013/mauriziopaper.pdf>>
- McCall, L. (1992). Does Gender Fit? Bourdieu, Feminism, and Conceptions of Social Order. *Theory and Society*, 21(6), 837-867.
- McEwan, B., & Sobre-Denton, M. (2011). Virtual Cosmopolitanism: Constructing Third Cultures and Transmitting Social and Cultural Capital through Social Media. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, 4(4), 252-258.

- McNay, L. (1999). Gender, Habitus and the Field: Pierre Bourdieu and the Limits of Reflexivity. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 16(1), 95-117.
- (2004). Agency and Experience: Gender as Lived Relation. In L. Adkins & B. Skeggs (eds.) *Feminism After Bourdieu*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Mead, M. (1928). *Coming of Age in Samoa: A Psychological Study of Primitive Youth for Western Civilization*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Mercado, H. O., & Vásquez, L. S. (2012). Cultura política de la juventud urbana de la región metropolitana de Managua. *Encuentro*, 91, 32-57.
- Meuwissen, L.E., Gorter, A.C. & Knottnerus, A.J.A. (2006). Impact of Accessible Sexual and Reproductive Health Care on Poor and Underserved Adolescents in Managua, Nicaragua: A Quasi-experimental Intervention Study. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 38(1), 56-61.
- Michael, D. C., Nettesheim, C., & Zhou, Y. (2012). China's Digital Generations 3.0: The Online Empire. In M. Deimler, R. Leisser, D. Rhodes & J. Sinha (eds.) *Own the Future: 50 Ways to Win from The Boston Consulting Group*, 14. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons
- Miguel, G. E. (2014). De la interpelación rockera a la evangélica: diálogos y fricciones en la producción musical contemporánea. *PLURA, Revista de Estudos de Religião/PLURA, Journal for the Study of Religion*, 4(2), 32-48.
- Mikkeli, H. & Pakkasvirta, J. (2007). *Tieteiden välissä: johdatus monitieteisyyteen, tieteidenvälisyyteen ja poikkitieteisyyteen*. Helsinki: WSOY.
- Miles, S. (2000). *Youth Lifestyles in a Changing World*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Molyneux, M. (1984). Mobilization Without Emancipation? Women's Interests, State and Revolution in Nicaragua. *Critical Social Policy*, 4(10), 59-71.
- (1998). Analyzing Women's Movements, *Development and Change*, 29(2), 219-245.
- Montenegro, S. (2001). *Jóvenes y cultura política en Nicaragua: la generación de los 90*. Managua: HISPAMER.
- Mortimer, J. T. (2009). Changing Experiences of Work. In A. Furlong (ed.) *Handbook of Youth and Young Adulthood: New Perspectives and Agendas*, 149-156. Oxon: Routledge.
- Muñoz-Navarro, A. (2009). Youth and Human Rights in Chile. Otherness, Political Identity, and Social Change. In T. Turfte and F. Enghel (eds.) *Youth Engaging with the World: Media, Communication and Social Change*, 43-60. NORDICOM: University of Gothenburg.
- Murra, J. V. (2002). *El mundo andino: población, medio ambiente y economía*. (Vol. 24). Fondo Editorial PUCP.
- Natanson, J. (2014). La triple crisis de los medios de comunicación. *Nueva Sociedad*, 249, 50-60.

- Nayak, A. (2003). *Race, Place and Globalization: Youth Cultures in a Changing World*. Oxford: Berg
- Nayak, A. & Kehily, M.J. (2008). *Gender, Youth and Culture: Young Masculinities and Femininities*, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Neumann, P. (2017). When Laws Are Not Enough: Violence against Women and Bureaucratic Practice in Nicaragua. *Social Forces*, 95(3), 1105-1125.
- Nilan, P. (2011). Youth Sociology Must Cross Cultures, *Youth Studies Australia*, 30(3), 20-26.
- Nilan, P., & Feixa, C. (2006). Introduction: Hybridity in a Plural World. In P. Nilan & C. Feixa (eds.) *Global Youth?: Hybrid Identities, Plural Worlds*, 1-13. London: Routledge.
- Obando Medina, C., Dahlblom, K., Dahlgren, L., Herrera, A., & Kullgren, G. (2011). I Keep My Problems to Myself: Pathways to Suicide Attempts in Nicaraguan Young Men. *Suicidology Online*, 2, 17-28.
- Oliart, P. & Feixa, C. (2012). Introduction: Youth Studies in Latin America - On Social Actors, Public Policies and New Citizenships, *Young*, 20(4), 329-344.
- Ortega y Gasset, J. (1933). El método histórico de las generaciones. In J. Ortega y Gasset, *Torno a Galileo, Obras completas*. Madrid: Revista de Occidente.
- Painter, J. (2000). Pierre Bourdieu. In Grang, M. and Thrift, N. (eds.) *Thinking Space*, London: Routledge.
- Pais, José Machado (2003). The Multiple Faces of the Future in the Labyrinth of Life. *Journal of Youth Studies* 6(2): 115–26.
- Pakkasvirta, J. & Saukkonen, P. (2004). *Nationalismit*. Helsinki: WSOY.
- Palfrey, J. G., & Gasser, U. (2011). *Born Digital: Understanding the First Generation of Digital Natives*. New York: Basic Books
- Peetz, P. (2008). Discourses on Violence in Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Nicaragua: Youth, Crime, and the Responses of the State. *IDEAS Working Paper Series From RePEc*, 10.2139/ssrn.1145411.
- (2011). Youth Violence in Central America: Discourses and Policies. *Youth & Society*, 43(4), 1459-1498.
- Pénard, T., & Poussing, N. (2010). Internet Use and Social Capital: The Strength of Virtual Ties. *Journal of Economic Issues*, 44(3), 569-595.
- Pérez, P. E. (2013). Empleabilidad, motivación por trabajar y políticas de empleo para jóvenes en Argentina. *Cuestiones de sociología:: Revista de estudios sociales*, 9, 158-161.
- Pérez Brignoli, H. (1989). *A Brief History of Central America*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Portillo, M., Urteaga, M., González, Y., Aguilera, Ó., & Feixa, C. (2012). De La Generación X a la Generación @. Trazos Transicionales e Identidades Juveniles en América Latina. *Ultima década*, 20(37), 137-174.

Prensky, M. (2006). *Don't Bother Me, Mom, I'm Learning!: How Computer and Video Games are Preparing Your Kids for 21st Century Success and How You Can Help!* Langfor: Elsevier Sci Ltd.

– (2001). Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants Part 1. *On the Horizon*, 9(5), 1-6.

Purhonen, S. (2005). Sukupolvikokemukset ja sukupolvitietoisuus suurten ikäluokkien elämäntarinoissa. In A. Karisto (ed.) *Suuret ikäluokat*, 156-184. Tampere: Vastapaino.

– (2007). *Sukupolvien ongelma: tutkielmia sukupolven käsitteestä, sukupolvitietoisuudesta ja suurista ikäluokista*. Helsinki: Helsingin Yliopisto.

Purhonen, S., Roos, J.P., Rahkonen, K (2006). Johdanto: Bourdieun sosiologian merkitys ja ominaislaatu. In S. Purhonen & J.P. Roos (eds.) *Bourdieu ja minä: näkökulmia Pierre Bourdieun sosiologiaan*, 7-54. Tampere: Vastapaino.

Pärssinen, M. (2002). Latin American Studies in Finland: Past Trends and New Perspectives. *European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies/Revista Europea de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe*, 72, 105-113.

Pääkkönen, H. (2011a). *Las caras nuevas. Nicaragualaisten korkeakouluopiskelijoiden poliittinen identiteetti sukupolvikokemuksena*. Helsinki: University of Helsinki.

Pääkkönen, H. (2011b) Limitaciones políticas de la generación joven Nicaragüense. *Confidencial Digital*. URL <http://www.confidencial.com.ni/archivos/articulo/4617/limitaciones-politicas-de-la-generacion-joven-nicaraguense>

Raby, R. (2007). Across a Great Gulf? Conducting Research with Adolescents. In A. L. Best (ed.) *Representing Youth: Methodological Issues in Critical Youth Studies*, 39-59. New York: New York University Press.

Raffe, D. (2003). Pathways Linking Education and Work: A Review of Concepts, Research, and Policy Debates, *Journal of Youth Studies*, 6(1), 3-19.

Raffo, C., & Reeves, M. (2000). Youth Transitions and Social Exclusion: Developments in Social Capital Theory. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 3(2), 147-166.

Ramirez, D. (2014). *Pentecostalism in Latin America*. In C. M. Robeck Jr. & A. Young (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism*, 112-131. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ramírez, S. (1999). *Adiós muchachos*. México: Alfaguara.

Randall, M. & Vivas, A. (1981). *Sandino's Daughters: Testimonies of Nicaraguan Women in Struggle*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press

- Rani, M., Figueroa, M.E. & Ainsle, R. (2003). The Psychosocial Context of Young Adult Sexual Behavior in Nicaragua: Looking Through the Gender Lens. *International Family Planning Perspectives*, 29(4), 174-181.
- Reay, D. (2004). Gendering Bourdieu's Concepts of Capitals? Emotional Capital, Women and Social Class. *The Sociological Review*, 52(2), 57-74.
- Reguillo, R. (2009). The Warrior's Code? Youth, Communication and Social Change. In T. Turfte and F. Enghel (eds.) *Youth Engaging with the World: Media, Communication and Social Change*, 21-42. NORDICOM: University of Gothenburg.
- Reif, L. L. (1986). Women in Latin American Guerrilla Movements: A Comparative Perspective. *Comparative Politics*, 18(2), 147-169.
- Repko, A. F. (2012). *Interdisciplinary Research: Process and Theory*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Repko, A. F., Szostak, R., Buchberger, M. P. (2014). *Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Risør, H., & Arteaga Pérez, I. (2018). Disjunctive Belongings and the Utopia of Intimacy: Violence, Love and Friendship among Poor Urban Youth in Neoliberal Chile. *Identities*, 25(2), 228-244.
- Rizzini, I., Caldeira, P., Caldeira, A., & Barros, D. (2010). Juventude e participação cidadã. In XXVII *International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA)*. URL http://www.ciespi.org.br/media/Artigos/Artigos%20pag%201/2010_Juventude_Rizzini_Caldeira_%20Caldeira_Barros.pdf
- Rizvi, F. (2005). International Education and the Production of Cosmopolitan Identities. In A. Arimoto, F. Huang, and K. Yokoyama (eds.) *Globalization and Higher Education*. Hiroshima University: Research Institute for Higher Education, International Publications Series 9.
- Roberts, K. (2007). Youth Transitions and Generations: A Response to Wyn and Woodman. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 10(2), 263-269.
- Roberts, S. (2010). Misrepresenting 'Choice Biographies': A Reply to Woodman. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 13(1), 137-149.
- Rocha, J. L. (2006). Violencia y políticas públicas hacia los jóvenes: las pandillas en Nicaragua. *Juventudes, Violencia y Exclusión: Desafíos para las Políticas Públicas*. Guatemala City: Magna Terra Editores.
- (2010). Un debate con muchas voces: Pandillas y estado en Nicaragua. *Temas*, 64, 29-37.
- (2011). Street Gangs of Nicaragua. In T. C., Bruneau, L. Dammert & E. Skinner (eds.) *Maras: Gang Violence and Security in Central America*, 105-121. Austin: University of Texas Press.

- Rodgers, D. (1999). *Youth Gangs and Violence in Latin America and the Caribbean: A Literature Survey*. Latin America and the Caribbean Region, Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development SMU. World Bank.
- (2002). *We Live in a State of Siege: Violence, Crime, and Gangs in Post-conflict Urban Nicaragua*. London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). Development Studies Institute (DESTIN).
- (2003). Youth Gangs in Colombia and Nicaragua: New Forms of Violence, New Theoretical Directions?. *Breeding Inequality—Reaping Violence, Exploring Linkages and Causality in Colombia and Beyond*. Outlook on Development Series. Uppsala: Collegium for Development Studies.
- (2005). Youth Gangs and the Perverse Livelihoods Strategies in Nicaragua: Challenging Certain Preconceptions and Shifting the Focus of the Analysis. *New Frontiers of Social Policy: Development in a Globalized World*. Arusha: The World Bank.
- (2006a). Living in the Shadow of Death: Gangs, Violence and Social Order in Urban Nicaragua, 1996-2002, *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 38(2), 267-292.
- (2006b). The State as a Gang: Conceptualizing the Governmentality of Violence in Contemporary Nicaragua. *Critique of Anthropology*, 26(3), 315-330.
- (2007a). When Vigilantes Turn Bad: Gangs, Violence, and Social Change in Urban Nicaragua. In D. Pratten, and A. Sen (eds.) *Global Vigilantes*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- (2007b). Joining the Gang and Becoming a Broder: The Violence of Ethnography in Contemporary Nicaragua. *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 26(4), 444-461.
- Roos, J. P. (2005). Laajat ja suppeat sukupolvet: sukupolviliikkeet suurten ikäluokkien ympärillä. In ed. A. Karisto (ed.) *Suuret ikäluokat*. Tampere: Vastapaino.
- Roos, J. P., Purhonen, S., Hoikkala, T. (2008). *Kenen sukupolveen kuulut?: suurten ikäluokkien tarina*, Helsinki: Gaudeamus.
- Roos, J. P & Rotkirch, A. (2003). Habituksen paluu? Evoluutioteorian huomioimisesta sosiologian ihmisenäkemyksessä, *Tieteessä tapahtuu*, 21(2), 33-37.
- Salazar, M., Goicolea, I., & Öhman, A. (2016). Respectable, Disreputable, or Rightful? Young Nicaraguan Women's Discourses on Femininity, Intimate Partner Violence, and Sexual Abuse: A Grounded Theory Situational Analysis. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 25(3), 315-332.
- Salazar, M., & Öhman, A. (2015). Negotiating Masculinity, Violence, and Responsibility: A Situational Analysis of Young Nicaraguan Men's Discourses on Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 24(2), 131-149.
- Salvia, A. (2013). Juventudes, problemas de empleo y riesgos de exclusión social El actual escenario de crisis mundial en la Argentina. *En Departamento Política Global y Desarrollo*. Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

- Salvia, A., & Tuñón, I. (2005). Los jóvenes y el mundo del trabajo en la Argentina actual. *Revista Encrucijadas*, 36, 25-50.
- Samponaro, P. (2009). 'Oye mi canto' ('Listen to My Song'): The History and Politics of Reggaetón. *Popular Music and Society*, 32(4), 489-506.
- Sandolval Gracia, C. (2006). *Otros amenazantes. Los nicaragüenses y la formación de identidades nacionales en Costa Rica*. Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, San José.
- Saraví, G. A. (2006). Biografías de exclusión: desventajas y juventud en Argentina. *Perfiles latinoamericanos*, 14(28), 83-116.
- Saucier, P. K. (2011). Cape Verdean Youth Fashion: Identity in Clothing. *Fashion Theory*, 15(1), 49-66.
- Schatz, S. & Gutiérrez-Rexach, J. J. (2002). *Conceptual Structure and Social Change: The Ideological Architecture of Democratization*. Westport: Praeger.
- Scherman, A., Arriagada, A., & Valenzuela, S. (2015). Student and Environmental Protests in Chile: The Role of Social Media. *Politics*, 35(2), 151-171.
- Schlegel, A. (2000). The Global Spread of Adolescent Culture. In L. J. Crockett & R. K. Silbereisen (eds.) *Negotiating Adolescence in Times of Social Change*, 71-88. London: Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schoon, I., & Schulenberg, J. (2013). The Assumption of Adult Roles in the UK, the U.S.A., and Finland: Antecedents and Associated Levels of Well-being and Health. In H. Helve & K. Evans (eds.), *Youth, Work Transitions and Wellbeing*, 45-57. London: The Tufnell Press.
- Schwaller, J. F. (2011). *The History of the Catholic Church in Latin America. From Conquest to Revolution and Beyond*. New York: New York University Press.
- Sharma, B., Harker, M., Harker, D., & Reinhard, K. (2010). Youth Transition to University in Germany and Australia: An Empirical Investigation of Healthy Eating Behaviour. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 13(3), 353-367.
- Sherrod, L. R., Torney-Purta, J., Flanagan, C. A. (2010). *Handbook of Research on Civic Engagement in Youth*. New Jersey: Jon Wiley & Sons.
- Shusterman, R. (1999). *Bourdieu: A Critical Reader*. Oxford; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell.
- Skeggs, B. (1997). *Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable*. London: Thousand Oaks.
- Smilde, D. (2005). A Qualitative Comparative Analysis of Conversion to Venezuelan Evangelicalism: How Networks Matter. *American Journal of Sociology*, 111(3), 757-796.
- Smith, C. L. (2007). Introduction. In C. L. Smith (ed.) *Revolution, Revival and Religious Conflict in Sandinista Nicaragua*, 1-12. Boston: Leiden.

- Smith, S. S. & Kulynych, J. (2002). It May be Social, But Why is it Capital? The Social Construction of Social Capital and the Politics of Language. *Politics & Society*, 30(1), 149-186.
- Sneary, J., Kohlberg, L., & Noam, G. (1983). Ego Development in Perspective: Structural Stage, Functional Phase, and Cultural Age-Period Models. *Developmental Review*, 3, 303-338.
- Stauber, B. (2007). Motivation in Transition, *Young*, 15(1), 31-47.
- Swain, J. (2002). The Right Stuff: Fashioning an Identity Through Clothing in a Junior School. *Gender and Education*, 14(1), 53-69.
- Sweetman, P. (2003). Twenty-first Century Disease? Habitual Reflexivity or the Reflexive Habitus. *The Sociological Review*, 51(4), 528-549.
- Tanner, J.L. (2006). Recentring during Emerging Adulthood. In J. J. Arnett and J. L. Tanner (eds.) *Emerging Adults in America: Coming of Age in the 21st Century*, 21-55. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association.
- Tarkkonen, L. (1987). *On Reliability of Composite Scales: An Essay on the Structure of Measurement and the Properties of the Coefficients of Reliability – A Unified Approach*. Helsinki: Finnish Statistical Society.
- Thomson, R., Holland, J., McGrellis, S., Bell, R., Henderson, S., & Sharpe, S. (2004). Inventing Adulthood: A Biographical Approach to Understanding Youth Citizenship. *The Sociological Review*, 52(2), 218-239.
- Toffler, A. (1991). *Suuri käänne*. Helsinki: Otava.
- Tolonen, T. (2005). Locality and Gendered Capital of Working-class Youth. *Young*, 13(4), 343-361.
- (2007). Social and Cultural Capital Meets Youth Research: A Critical Approach. In H. Helve & J. Bynner (eds.) *Youth and Social Capital*, 29-42. London: The Tufnell Press.
- Torres, V. S., Goicolea, I., Edin, K., & Öhman, A. (2012). ‘Expanding Your mind’: The Process of Constructing Gender-equitable Masculinities in Young Nicaraguan Men Participating in Reproductive Health or Gender Training Programs. *Global Health Action*, 5(1), 1-14.
- Turner, B. S. & Khondker, H. H. (2010). *Globalization: East and West*. London: Sage.
- Valenzuela, S. (2014). Facebook, Twitter, and Youth Engagement: A Quasi-Experimental Study of Social Media Use and Protest Behavior Using Propensity Score Matching. *International Journal of Communication*, 8, 2046-2070.
- (2013). Unpacking the Use of Social Media for Protest Behavior. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 57(7), 920-942.
- Valkila, J. (2014). *Fair Trade Coffee in Nicaragua: Impacts of Certified Production on Cooperatives, Farmers, and Laborers*. Helsinki: University of Helsinki.

- Valtonen, P. (2001). *Latinalaisen Amerikan historia*. Helsinki: Gaudeamus.
- Vanden, H. E. & Prevost, G. (2012). *Politics of Latin America: The Power Game*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Vandenberghe, F. (1999). "The Real is Relational": An Epistemological Analysis of Pierre Bourdieu's Generative Structuralism. *Sociological Theory*, 17(1), 32-67.
- Vandegrift, D. (2016). 'We don't have any limits': Russian Young Adult Life Narratives Through a Social Generations Lens. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 19(2), 221-236.
- Vázquez J.J., Panadero, S., Paz Rincón, P. (2006). Acción política no convencional en universitarios españoles, chilenos, salvadoreños y nicaragüenses. *Psicología Política*, 33, 25-41.
- Vehkalahti, K. (2008). *Kyselytutkimuksen mittarit ja menetelmät*. Helsinki: Tammi.
- Velasquez, A., & LaRose, R. (2015). Youth Collective Activism through Social Media: The Role of Collective Efficacy. *New Media & Society*, 17(6), 899-918.
- Vigoya, Viveros M. (2004). Contemporary Latin American Perspectives on Masculinity. In M.C. Guttmann (ed.) *Changing Men and Masculinities in Latin America*, 27-59. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Villemez, W. J., & Touhey, J. C. (1977). A Measure of Individual Differences in Sex Stereotyping and Sex Discrimination: The "Macho" Scale. *Psychological Reports*, 41(2), 411-415.
- Virtanen, M. (2001). *Fennomanian perilliset: poliittiset traditiot ja sukupolvien dynamiikka*. Helsinki: SKS.
- Virtanen, P. K. (2007). *Changing Lived Worlds of Contemporary Amazonian Native Young People: Manchineri Youths in the Reserve and the City, Brazil-Acre*. Helsinki: University of Helsinki.
- (2012). *Indigenous Youth in Brazilian Amazonia: Changing Lived Worlds*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Wallace, C. (2001). Youth, Citizenship and Empowerment. In H. Helve and C. Wallace (eds.) *Youth, Citizenship and Empowerment*, 11-31. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing.
- Walther, A. (2006). Regimes of Youth Transitions: Choice, Flexibility and Security in Young People's Experiences across Different European Contexts. *Young*, 14(2), 119-139.
- Watson, S. S. (2014). 'Reading' National Identity in Panama through Renato, a First Generation Panamanian Reggae en Español Artist. *Alternativas* 2/2014
- Weatherall, A. (2002). *Gender, Language and Discourse*. Hove, East Sussex: Routledge
- Weegels, J. (2018). 'The Terror and Scourge of the Barrio': Representations of Youth Crime and Policing on Nicaraguan Television News. *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 50 (4), 861-887

Weigert, A. J., Teitge, J. M., & Teitge, D. W. (1986). *Society and Identity: Toward a Sociological Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Weller S. (2007). Managing the Move to Secondary School: The Significance of Children's Social Capital. In H. Helve & J. Bynner (eds.) *Youth and Social Capital*, 107-126. London: The Tufnell Press.

- (2010). Young People's Social Capital: Complex Identities, Dynamic Networks. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 33, 872-888.

Welti, C. (2002). Adolescents in Latin America: Facing the Future with Scepticism. In B. B. Brown, W. R. Larson & T. S. Saraswathi (eds.) *The World's Youth. Adolescence in Eight Regions of the Globe*, 276-306. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wilson, E. A. (2011). Redemption from Below: The Emergence of the Latin American Popular Pentecostals. In C. L. Smith (ed.) *Pentecostal Power Expressions, Impact and Faith of Latin American Pentecostalism*, 9-35. Boston: Brill.

Wolf, S. (2012). Creating Folk Devils: Street Gang Representations in El Salvador's Print Media. *Journal of Human Security*, 8(2), 36-63.

Wolfson, N. & Manes, J. (1980). "Don't Dear Me!" In R. Borker, N. Furman, & S. McConnell-Ginet, (eds). *Women and Language in Literature and Society*, 79-110. New York: Praeger.

Wolseth, J. (2008). Safety and Sanctuary: Pentecostalism and Youth Gang Violence in Honduras. *Latin American Perspectives*, 35(4), 96-111.

Woodman, D. (2009). The Mysterious Case of the Choice Biography: Ulrich Beck, Structure/Agency and the Middling State of Theory in the Sociology of Youth. *Journal of Youth Studies* 12(3), 243-256.

– (2012). Life Out of Sync: How New Patterns of Further Education and Rise of Precarious Employment Are Reshaping Young People's Relationships. *Sociology* 46(6): 1074-1090

– (2013). Researching 'Ordinary' Young People in a Changing World: The Sociology of Generations and the 'Missing Middle' in Youth Research. *Sociological Research Online* 18(1), 1-12.

– (2015). Class, Gender and Generation Matter: Using the Concept of Social Generation to Study Inequality and Social Change. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 18(10), 1-9.

Woodman, D., and Wyn, J. (2011). *Young People in a Time of Uncertainty*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing.

Woodman, D., & Wyn, J. (2013). Youth Policy and Generations: Why Youth Policy Needs to 'Rethink Youth.' *Social Policy and Society*, 12(2), 265-275.

Wunderich, V. (1995). *Sandino: una biografía política*. Editorial Nueva Nicaragua.

Wyn, J. (2012). The Making of a Generation: Policy and the Lives and Aspirations of Generation X. *Journal of Educational Administration and History* 44(3), 269-282.

– (2017). Gendered Transitions from Education to Work: The Mysterious Relationship between the Fields of Education and Work. *Journal of Sociology*, 53(2), 492-506.

Wyn, J., and Andres, L. (2011). Navigating Complex Lives: A Longitudinal, Comparative Perspective on Young People's Trajectories. *Early Intervention Psychiatry* 5(1), 17-21.

Wynn, J. and White, R. (1997). *Rethinking Youth*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin.

Wyn, J., and Woodman, D. (2006). Generation, Youth and Social Change in Australia. *Journal of Youth Studies* 9(5), 495-514.

– (2007). Researching Youth in a Context of Social Change: A Reply to Roberts. *Journal of Youth Studies* 10(3), 373-381

Xenos, M., Vromen, A., & Loader, B. D. (2014). The Great Equalizer? Patterns of Social Media Use and Youth Political Engagement in Three Advanced Democracies. *Information, Communication & Society*, 17(2), 151-167.

Youniss, J., Bales, S., Christmas-Best, V., Diversi, M., McLaughlin, M., Silbereisen, R. (2002). Youth Civic Engagement in the Twenty-First Century. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 12(1), 121–148.

Zalaquett, G. (1983). *La crucial labor ideológica de la mujer*. Nicaragua 11.2.1983 edn, Barricada. Organo Oficial del Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional.

Zelaya, E., Marín, F.M., García, J., Berglund, S., Liljestrand, J. & Persson, L.A. (1997). Gender and Social Differences in Adolescent Sexuality and Reproduction in Nicaragua, *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 21(1), 39-46.

Online Sources

CNU Consejo Nacional de Universidades URL <<http://www.cnu.edu.ni/>> 2 February 2017

El País (2015) Poésia Contra el Canal en Nicaragua. URL <http://cultura.elpais.com/cultura/2015/02/18/actualidad/1424277917_785420.html> 30 May 2015

ILO 2016 International Labour Organization. 2016 Labour Overview of Latin America and the Caribbean. URL <http://www.ilo.org/americas/publicaciones/panorama-laboral/WCMS_545825/lang-en/index.htm> 7 March 2017

Index Mundi 2016a, Nicaragua Demographic Profile
http://www.indexmundi.com/nicaragua/demographics_profile.html> 17 March 2017

Index Mundi 2016b, Finland Demographic Profile URL
 <http://www.indexmundi.com/finland/demographics_profile.html> 17 March 2017

Latinobarómetro 2016: Latinobarómetro Report of 2016 URL
 <<http://www.latinobarometro.org/latContents.jsp>> 8 November 2017

Mitrab (2016) Ministerio De Trabajo, Acta Nro 2 Salario Mínimo 2016 URL
 <<http://www.mitrab.gob.ni/documentos/salario-minimo/Acta%20No.%202%20CNSM%2018.08.16-%20Ratificacion%20Salario%20Minimo.pdf/view>> 4 April 2017

PRB World Population Data Sheet 2014, URL
 <<http://www.prb.org/publications/datasheets/2014/2014-world-population-data-sheet.aspx>> 13 November 2015

Trading Economics (2016) URL <<http://www.tradingeconomics.com/nicaragua/wages>> 20 March 2017

Transparency International 2016 URL
 <https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2016> 10 October 2017

UN World Population Prospects (2017). United Nations DESA / Population Division Data URL
 <<https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/dataquery/>> 12 December 2017

UNDP (2012) Youth Political Participations and Decision Making Fact Sheet URL
 <<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-political-participation.pdf>> 15 July 2017

UN / DSPD (2016). World Youth Report on Youth Civic Engagement. URL
 <<https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/2016/07/19/world-youth-report-on-youth-civic-engagement/>> 5 January 2018

UNESCO Institute for Education (2005) Dr. Hanemann: *Nicaragua's literacy campaign*. Background paper prepared for the Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2006. Literacy for Life. URL <<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001460/146007e.pdf>> 10 June 2017

Unicef Migration Profiles 2013 URL
 <<https://esa.un.org/migmgmprofiles/indicators/files/Nicaragua.pdf>> 23 January 2017

World Bank 2016 Nicaragua Overview URL
 <<http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/nicaragua/overview>> 12 December 2016

WEF 2017 World Economic Forum. Global Gender Gap Index 2017. URL
 <<http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2017/dataexplorer/#economy=NIC>> 3 December 2017

WTO (2015) World Trade Organization Trade Profile / Nicaragua 2015

APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Survey Form



Estimada/o estudiante

Muchas gracias por dedicar su tiempo para contestar a esta encuesta. **La encuesta tiene 4 partes y ocupara aproximadamente 10 minutos de su tiempo**, pero si tiene menos tiempo, puede contestar a los partes que quiera. Toda la información es muy valiosa.

La encuesta forma parte de un estudio realizada en la Universidad de Helsinki, Finlandia. El enfoque de la investigación es estudiar las opiniones de las/los estudiantes nicaragüenses. Son pocos los estudios que den enfoque a las opiniones de universitarias/os, y por eso su participación es sumamente importante. Las respuestas sean utilizadas únicamente en el estudio, y se puede contestar anónimo.

¡Sus opiniones son muy importantes! ¡Gracias!

Sinceramente,

Hanna Pääkkönen

Investigadora, Universidad de Helsinki, Finlandia

A caso de cualquier duda o pregunta, estaré dispuesta a entregarle más información. Dirigirse a: hanna-maija.paakkonen@helsinki.fi

Por favor elige las opciones que mejor corresponden con su opinión. No existen respuestas equivocadas, su opinión es muy importante.

PARTE 1. INFORMACIÓN BÁSICA

Año del nacimiento

☐ 1980–1982 ☐ 1983–1985
☐ 1986–1988 ☐ 1989–1991
☐ 1992–1994 ☐ 1995–1997 ☐ Otro, ¿cuál? _____

Sexo ☐ masculino ☐ femenino

Domicilio (Departamento)

☐ Boaco ☐ Carazo ☐ Chinandega ☐ Chontales ☐ Estelí ☐ Granada
☐ Jinotega ☐ León ☐ Madriz ☐ Managua ☐ Masaya ☐ Matagalpa ☐ Nueva Segovia
☐ RAAN ☐ RAAS ☐ Río San Juan ☐ Rivas

☐ Otro, ¿cuál? _____

Universidad en que estudia

☐ UCA ☐ UNAN ☐ UNI ☐ UPOLI ☐ UAM ☐ UNA

☐ Otro, ¿cuál? _____

Carrera: _____

Año de estudios

☐ 1-2 ☐ 3-4 ☐ 5-6 ☐ 7-8 ☐ Otro

PARTE 2. VALORES, OPINIONES Y PERSPECTIVAS

¿Qué tan importantes son los asuntos mencionados abajo para usted?

	Nada de importancia	Poca importancia	No se / No quiero responder	Importante	Muy importante
Poder estudiar la carrera que elegiste tu mismo/a.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Graduarme con buenas calificaciones.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ganar mucho dinero.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trabajar en algo que me interesa.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trabajar en cualquier trabajo, hasta que puedo mantenerme.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ayudar a mi familia.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ayudar a los menos afortunados.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Poder vivir y trabajar en Nicaragua.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Poder vivir y trabajar en otro país.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Seguir mis valores individuales.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Seguir mis valores religiosos.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Seguir el ejemplo de mis padres.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cumplir con las expectativas de mi familia.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pertenecer a un partido político.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pertenecer a un organización estudiantil	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pertenecer a un equipo de deporte u otro grupo de pasatiempo.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Nada de importancia	Poca importancia	No se / No quiero responder	Importante	Muy importante

Involucrarme únicamente con grupos que corresponden con mi ideología personal.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tener amigos académicos.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tener contactos con estudiantes de otros países.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tener contactos con jóvenes de otros países.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tomar parte en organizaciones u/o movimientos sociales.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tomar parte en movimientos comunales.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

¿Comentario u opinión? Escribir libremente

¿Ha sufrido discriminación u exclusión?

	En la universidad		En el vida laboral		Por parte de sus amigos		Por parte de su familia		En alguna otra situación	
	Si	No	Si	No	Si	No	Si	No	Si	No
Por su ideología política	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Por sus creencias religiosas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Por su género	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Por su domicilio	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Por su edad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Por su etnicidad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Por algún otra razón	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Si eligió "por algún otro razón" u algún otro situación, ¿cuál era?

Estos son opiniones y comentarios sobre la juventud y sociedad nicaragüense de algunos de los lectores de una publicación digital nicaragüense. ¿Está usted de acuerdo?

	Nada de acuerdo	Muy poco de acuerdo	No se / No quiero responder	Bastante de acuerdo	Completa mente de acuerdo
La juventud de hoy quiere que todo se les	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

dé a la mano.

La juventud de hoy no tiene valores morales.

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

Las dificultades que enfrentan los jóvenes son causadas por la sociedad.

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

Los jóvenes de hoy solo piensan en dinero.

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

Los jóvenes de hoy solo estudian para ganar dinero.

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

A los estudiantes no les interesa ayudar a la sociedad, por eso optan salir del país.

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

A los políticos actuales no les interesa la situación de los estudiantes.

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

Los políticos que tenemos actualmente son reflejos de nuestra sociedad.

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

Para cambiar la sociedad los jóvenes deberían luchar como se ha hecho en los países árabes.

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

Cambios en la sociedad tienen que venir paulatinamente y sin violencia.

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

Lo importante seria, que todos los jóvenes se unieron.

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

Educación no vale mucho si no hay oportunidades de trabajo.

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

Si en una votación solo existen opciones malas, es mejor no votar.

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

Nada de
acuerdo

Muy poco de
acuerdo

No se / No
quiero
responder

Bastante de
acuerdo

Completamente
de acuerdo

Los estudiantes tienen mejores valores morales que otros jóvenes.

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

La política no sirve, es mejor buscar otras maneras.

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

¿Comentario u opinión? Escribir libremente

¿Está usted de acuerdo con estas presunciones?

	Nada de acuerdo	Muy poco de acuerdo	No se / No quiero responder	Bastante de acuerdo	Completamente de acuerdo
La gente mayor no sabe comportarse en el mundo de hoy.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
La gente que ahora está en el poder no entiende el tiempo en que vivimos.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Las personas jóvenes son más capaces de tomar decisiones buenas que las personas mayores.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hoy día los jóvenes tienen que demostrar su capacidad más que antes si quieren alcanzar algo en la vida.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Los hombres jóvenes son menos machistas que los hombres viejos.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Las mujeres jóvenes son menos feministas que las mujeres viejas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Los jóvenes que no estudian terminan vagos.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tengo más en común con los jóvenes de otros países que la gente mayor de mi país.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
En la sociedad de hoy hay más oportunidades para las mujeres.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Nada de acuerdo	Muy poco de acuerdo	No se / No quiero responder	Bastante de acuerdo	Completamente de acuerdo
En la sociedad de hoy hay más oportunidades para los hombres.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feminismo significa igualdad.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feminismo significa más poder a las mujeres que a los hombres.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Globalización significa más oportunidades para todos.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Globalización significa más oportunidades para los mejor afortunados.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

PARTE 3. OPINIONES DE LA SOCIEDAD

¿Qué tal graves en la sociedad nicaragüense le parecen los asuntos mencionados abajo?

	No es un problema	Un poco problemático	No se / No quiero responder	Problema	Problema grave
Economía	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Inseguridad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Desempleo	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Falta de oportunidades	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Falta de justicia	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Falta de derechos humanos	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Destrucción del medioambiente	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Falta de educación	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sistema política	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Corrupción	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	No es un problema	Un poco problemático	No se / No quiero responder	Problema	Problema grave
El poder de religión	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Falta del poder de religión	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Personalismo	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Desigualdad de géneros	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Distribución de ingresos	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Falta de libertad de expresión	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

¿Comentario u opinión? Escribir libremente

¿Qué tal importantes le parecen estos eventos / fenómenos internacionales?

	Nada de importancia	Poca importancia	No se / No quiero responder	Importante	Muy importante
El ataque de World Trade Center de 9/11	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Crisis de la economía mundial	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cambio del clima	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pobreza	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Primavera árabe	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Guerra de Iraq	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hambruna en el Cuerno de África	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conferencia de Durban sobre el cambio climático 2011	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

¿Comentario u opinión? Escribir libremente _____

¿Qué tal importantes le parecen estos eventos / fenómenos nacionales?

	Nada de importancia	Poca importancia	No se / No quiero responder	Importante	Muy importante
19 de julio 1979	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Terremoto de 1972	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Huracán Mitch	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Triunfo de Chamorro 1990	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
La guerra de los 80	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Elecciones presidenciales de 1996	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Elecciones presidenciales de 2001	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Elecciones presidenciales de 2006	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

El proceso de re-elección de Ortega	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Elecciones municipales de 2008	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Re-elección de Ortega 2011	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
El 30 aniversario de 19 de julio 1979	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reforma constitucional	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Alfabetización	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Problemas con las cédulas antes de las elecciones de 2011	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
El desempleo actual	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

¿Comentario u opinión? Escribir libremente _____

PARTE 4. MEDIOS DE COMUNICACIÓN

¿Utiliza los medios de comunicación mencionados abajo?

	Cada día	Algunas veces al semana	Algunas veces al mes	Nunca
Utilizo redes de media social (Facebook, Hi5, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Utilizo internet por mis estudios	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Busco noticias de internet en mi tiempo libre.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Utilizo internet para tomar parte en conversaciones en línea, demostraciones virtuales, expresar mi opinión u un comentario en redes sociales, blogs etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Leo periódicos nacionales	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Leo periódicos internacionales	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Veo noticias de televisión nacional	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Veo noticias de canales internacionales



¿A cuál de estos medios de comunicaciones usted confía más?

☐

Periódicos nacionales u / o sus sitios de internet

☐

Periódicos internacionales u /o sus sitios de internet

☐

Canales nacionales

☐

Canales internacionales

☐

Servicios de noticias independientes de internet

¿Algún otro medio de comunicación en que confía más?

¡MUCHAS GRACIAS POR SU PARTICIPACIÓN! POR FAVOR, ELIGE SI QUIERE RESPONDER ANÓNIMA/O U DEJAR SU INFORMACIÓN.

El estudio será continuado con entrevistas que realizara la investigadora en Nicaragua el julio y agosto del 2012. Si usted tiene interés en participar y contar más de sus opiniones y perspectivas del futuro, por favor deje su contacto aquí. Su participación será muy valorada. Nombres y contactos de las/los participantes no sean publicadas bajo ninguna circunstancia.

Nombre: _____

Correo electrónico: _____

Teléfono: _____

☐

Quiero contestar anónimo/a.

¿Comentario u opinión? Escribir libremente aquí:

Appendix 2. List of interviewees

Individual discussions	Year of birth
<i>Female G1</i>	<i>1986-1992</i>
<i>Female G2</i>	<i>1986-1992</i>
<i>Female G3</i>	<i>1986-1992</i>
<i>Female G4</i>	<i>1986-1992</i>
<i>Female G5</i>	<i>1986-1992</i>
<i>Female G5</i>	<i>1986-1992</i>
<i>Female G6</i>	<i>1986-1992</i>
<i>Female G7</i>	<i>1986-1992</i>
<i>Male H1</i>	<i>1986-1992</i>
<i>Male H2</i>	<i>1986-1992</i>
<i>Male H3</i>	<i>1986-1992</i>
<i>Male H4</i>	<i>1986-1992</i>
<i>Male H5</i>	<i>1986-1992</i>
<i>Male H6</i>	<i>1986-1992</i>
<i>Male H7</i>	<i>1986-1992</i>
<i>Male H8</i>	<i>1986-1992</i>
<i>Male H9</i>	<i>1986-1992</i>
<i>Male H10</i>	<i>1986-1992</i>

Group 1 UNAN Managua	Year of birth
<i>Female 1, Group 1</i>	<i>1989-1991</i>
<i>Female 2, Group 1</i>	<i>1989-1991</i>
<i>Male 1, Group 1</i>	<i>1989-1991</i>
<i>Male 2, Group 1</i>	<i>1989-1991</i>
<i>Male 3. Group 1</i>	<i>1989-1991</i>

Group 2 UNAN Managua	Year of birth		Year of birth
<i>Male A, Group 2</i>	<i>1986-1992</i>	<i>Female A, Group 2</i>	<i>1986-1992</i>
<i>Male B, Group 2</i>	<i>1986-1992</i>	<i>Female B, Group 2</i>	<i>1986-1992</i>
<i>Male C, Group 2</i>	<i>1986-1992</i>	<i>Female C, Group 2</i>	<i>1986-1992</i>
<i>Male D, Group 2</i>	<i>1986-1992</i>		
<i>Male E, Group 2</i>	<i>1986-1992</i>		
<i>Male F, Group 2</i>	<i>1986-1992</i>		
<i>Male G, Group 2</i>	<i>1986-1992</i>		
<i>Male H, Group 2</i>	<i>1986-1992</i>		
<i>Male I, Group 2</i>	<i>1986-1992</i>		